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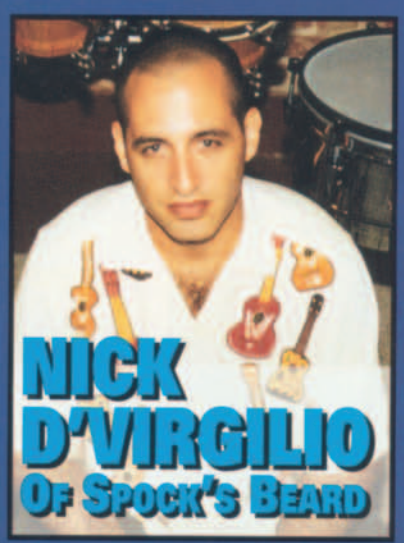

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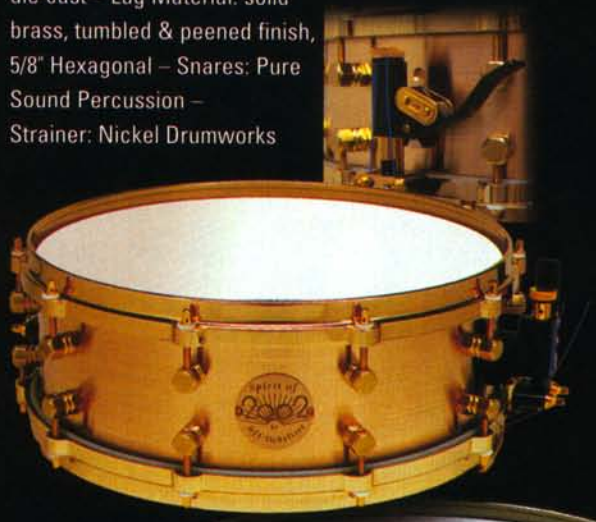

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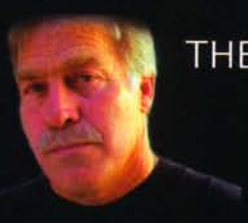

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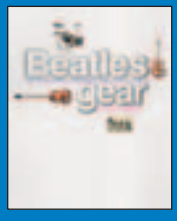

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Masters

It's the sound.

As you make your way into the studio,
you might think back about all those articles you've read. The
ones about guys that keep hundreds of exotic and vintage
drums around trying to get the perfect sound.
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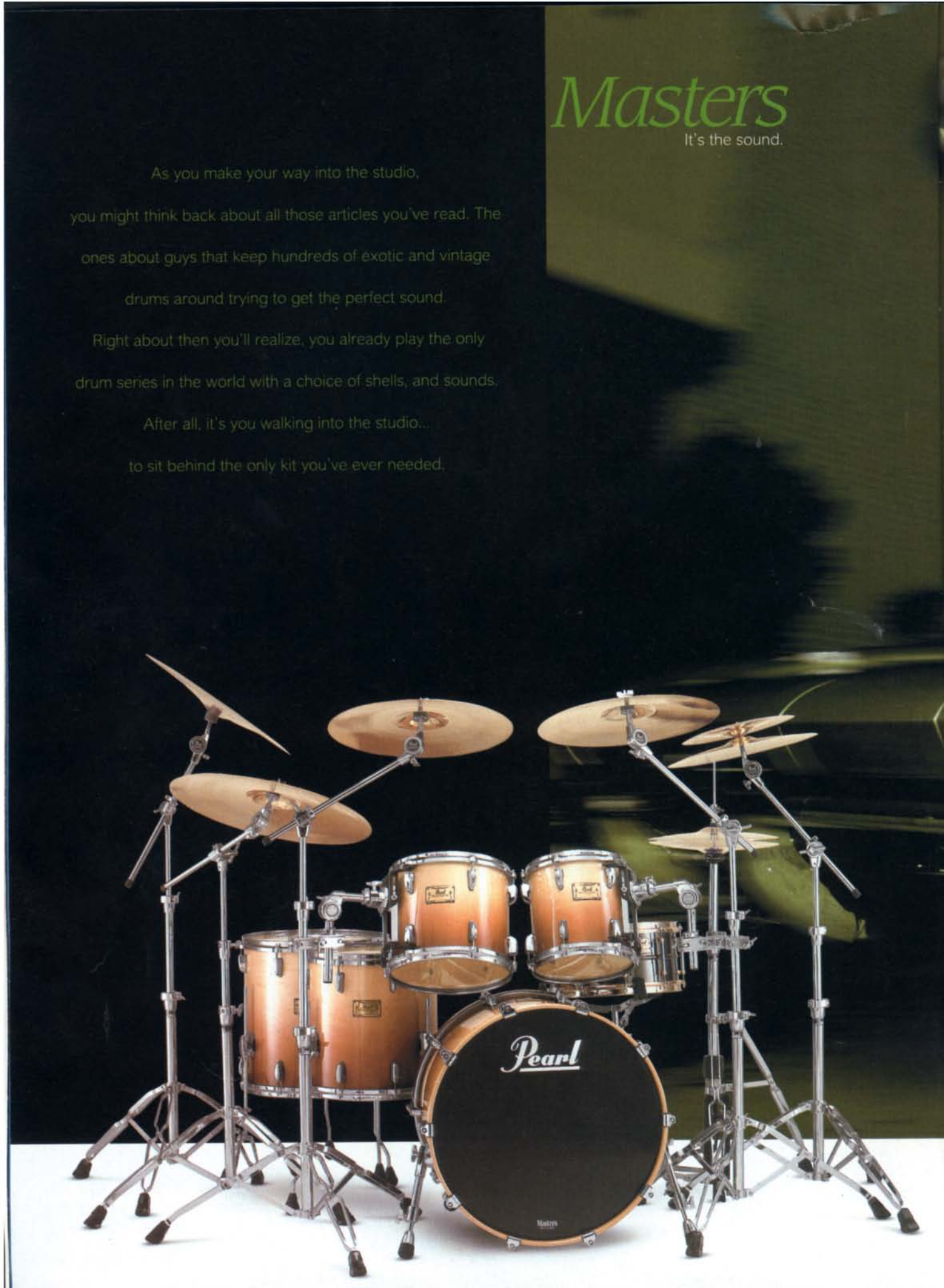
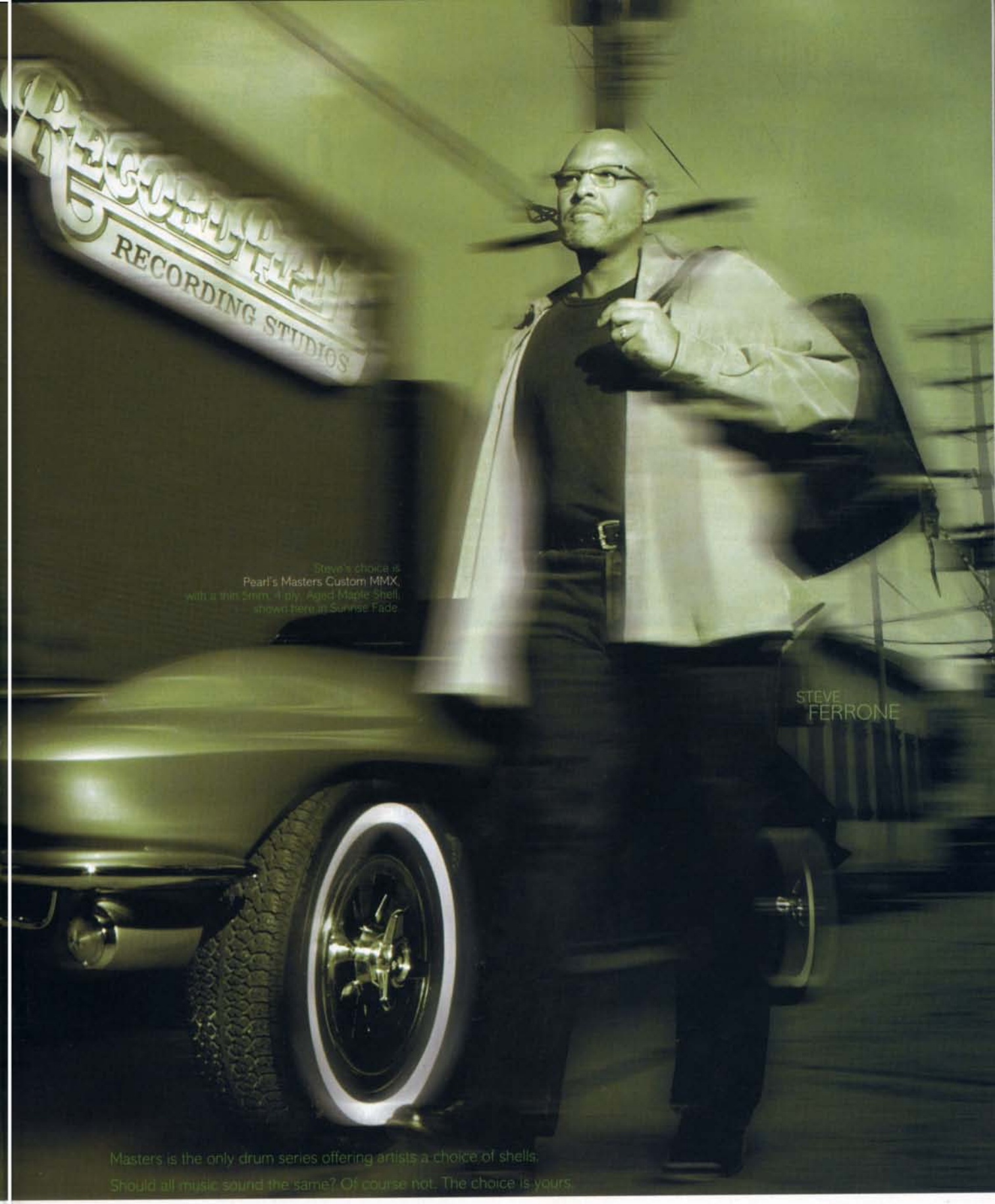
drum series in the world with a choice of shells, and sounds.
After all, it's you walking into the studio...
to sit behind the only kit you've ever needed.





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Masters Mahogany Classic MHX, 4 ply African Mahogany. deep, round, vintage.

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Your Own Best Critic

As editor of *Modern Drummer*'s *Critique* department, each week I receive dozens of independently released CDs for review consideration. Despite what all the "do-it-yourself" music-biz books say, publicizing your own CD is about as fun as being stuck behind a garbage truck on a muggy day. I know, because I've done it for my own bands for years. And it's more than just the rejection. What really bums me out is when I get no response of *any* kind from an editor. I mean, a simple email saying, "Never soil my in-box with your hellish din again" would suffice. But, often, nothing. What ever happened to common courtesy, anyway?

Working at *MD* has given me a perspective from the other side of the fence as well. The music press doesn't have it so easy these days. Playing and selling music has always been a business. But as the major labels become increasingly run by marketers and accountants, popular music becomes more and more the domain of prepackaged acts and clones of the latest hit. This makes your average critic very cranky.

Perhaps more importantly, the rise of the home studio has resulted in thousands of sub-par recordings flooding the market. For every home-grown groundbreaker like Moby, there are a hundred artists with nothing new to say. Again, more crankiness for those who have to figure out the difference.

So what does this all have to do with you, humble drummer? Plenty. If you have a self-produced CD that you want *MD* to consider reviewing, be aware that your competition is fiercer than ever. In the cold light of day, compare your CD to the best albums in your genre. But be honest with yourself! Because, frankly, you can't trust anyone else to be honest with you.

So, does your music measure up? No? Well, that's okay. At least now you know what to do to improve it. You say it *does* compare well? Great! Send it in, we'd love to hear it. Just do me a couple favors.

First, be patient; sometimes it takes us a little while to listen to every CD we receive.

Second, if we reject it, don't take that as a "ruling from above" that your disc, or your playing, are somehow unworthy. Rather, understand that we only have room to publish a very small percentage of what we receive. And of that number, we feel it's our duty to dedicate a good amount of space to new releases by readers' favorite artists.

And last, if we do choose to review your album, remember us when you get to the top. But also remember that, ultimately, the only opinion worth the paper it's written on is your own.

Adam Budofsky

MODERN DRUMMER

Volume 26, Number 4

The World's Most Widely Read Drum Magazine

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Brian Reitzell And Kenny Wollesen

Edward Clover

The interview with Brian Reitzell in the January 2002 issue was great. When I first saw the photo of Brian and his electronic kit I thought, "Here's another techno geek." But Brian really impressed me as a dedicated and innovative musician with a true appreciation of the drumming tradition as well as a groundbreaking spirit. I was also pleased with the extended length of the interview; I was reading it for a good, long while.

David Richman
via Internet

I want to express my joy in seeing your January articles on Brian Reitzell and Kenny Wollesen. Brian's work with Redd Kross was nothing short of stunning. The soundtrack to *The Virgin Suicides* is sheer genius. Kenny's tracks with Tom Waits ride my turntable at least once a week to this day. These two drummers possess more integrity, credibility, and originality than all the one-hit-wonder-band drummers of the current MTV generation will enjoy during their entire careers.

Bravo, *MD*. Maybe I'll renew my subscription after all. Now, how about covering Thomas Wydler (currently touring with Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds) for us artists, and knocking off the fanzine-fawning over painted-faced clown rockers?

You know I still love ya, right?

Michael Doskocil
Las Vegas, NV

Billy's Mechanisms

I couldn't help but smile while reading Billy Ward's January article on developing mechanisms to help maintain good time. It put me in mind of a demo session I did a few years ago. The engineer kept stopping the session due to an annoying hum coming through the overhead mic's. After twenty minutes of trying to isolate the offending piece of equipment, the engineer glared at me through the glass and asked, "Are you humming?" To which I had to respond, "Uh, yeah." It turns out that I have been humming the bass line for years.

So, fair warning, folks: Choose your mechanism carefully! Thanks to *MD* for the great series, and to Mr. Ward for his cogent writing.

Todd Huenecke
Aurora, IL

A Practical Guide To Sound Reduction

It's great to see you guys doing articles on how to reduce the sound in drum rooms. I live in the middle house of a row of townhouses. Last winter I "soundproofed" my garage to make a practice space. With the invaluable help of Jeff S. at Auralex I was able to kill the transmission of sound about 95%!

I used Auralex U-Boats to rest the entire room on, as well as staggered studs, Sheet-Blok, resilient channel, and many layers of drywall. My friends laughed at me in the beginning, but since I couldn't afford an additional three grand for someone else to do the job, it was up to me. It took me about three and a half months, but I can now play from 8:00 AM until 11:00 PM without disturbing anyone.

I wish I had been able to see articles like the ones you are writing. I'm sure my project would have gone a great deal faster and smoother. In any case, please let everyone know that if you put in the time and money required to do the job correctly the first time, you will be successful.

Andrew Kugler
via Internet

As a practicing architect and drummer, it has been a joy to read Mark Parsons' series on sound-reduction measures. The information presented is thoroughly researched and well explained. This month I felt as though I was reading a professional trade journal article. One could not go wrong following Mark's advice.

Rob Davis, AIA
Denver, CO

Backbeats Feedback

On behalf of the Warwick Summer Arts Festival and Newman Taylor Baker and his crew, I want to thank you for the wonderful January *Backbeats* report on "A Celebration Of The Drumset." Artists create work, and producers bring it to the

Joey Jordison

I was excited to hear that *Modern Drummer* had decided to interview Joey Jordison. Frankly, his intensity is the only reason that I bother listening to Slipknot. Although at times his technique seems to act as a single-edged sword, I think he's the best of the new crop of metal drummers that has arisen over the past five years.

With this in mind, I was anxious to read about Joey's drum sound, tuning technique, hardware choices, practice sessions, studio experiences, etc. Some of these subjects were touched upon lightly, but by the end of the article I was clamoring for something a little more in-depth. For example, what kind of Remo heads does Joey use? How about mic' placement? Tuning techniques? How did he develop his overwhelming speed? How does he manage to keep time at that speed?

I couldn't care less about what it's like to play in a mask, and I think most other drummers feel the same. It seems as though *MD* was more interested in picking up a few stray extra buyers by placing Joey on the cover than in providing drummers with insight or useful information. Please, don't leave us hanging! Focus on the cake instead of the icing.

Shane Newsome

stage. But it is the writers and publishers who spread the word to the general community. This validation in print is critically important to the growth of new ideas in the arena of contemporary music.

I have shared your report with the New York State Council on the Arts, which underwrote this project. They will spread the good news around the agency. We hope that Mr. Baker's project can be seen and heard by more audiences. Your report will undoubtedly help to spread the news.

Jeanette Vuocolo
Co-producer
Warwick Summer Arts Festival
via Internet

Frisell's Different View

Kudos to Michael Parillo for his excellent interview with Bill Frisell in the January 2002 issue. Frisell's unique musical style is nothing short of sublime, and it was nice to read his descriptions of the relationships he's had with drummers past and present. I've been an *MD* subscriber for nearly fifteen years, and the *Different View* column has been one of my favorites since its introduction several years ago. Keep up the good work.

Mark Kaefer
Somerville, MA

Istanbul Review Clarification

Chap Ostrander's review of Istanbul Mehmet Cymbals in your January issue concluded by saying, "Universal Percussion is the exclusive US distributor for Istanbul cymbals...." Universal is indeed distributing Istanbul *Mehmet* cymbals. However, DR Music is the distributor of Istanbul *Agop* cymbals. This brand includes the Alchemy and Traditional series that were so favorably reviewed in the September and October 2000 issues of *MD*. DR Music/Istanbul Agop are also the only licensed manufacturers of the Mel Lewis Signature Series. I just want to make sure that dealers and consumers have the correct contact information for each brand.

Anthony Corona
DR Music (Istanbul Agop)
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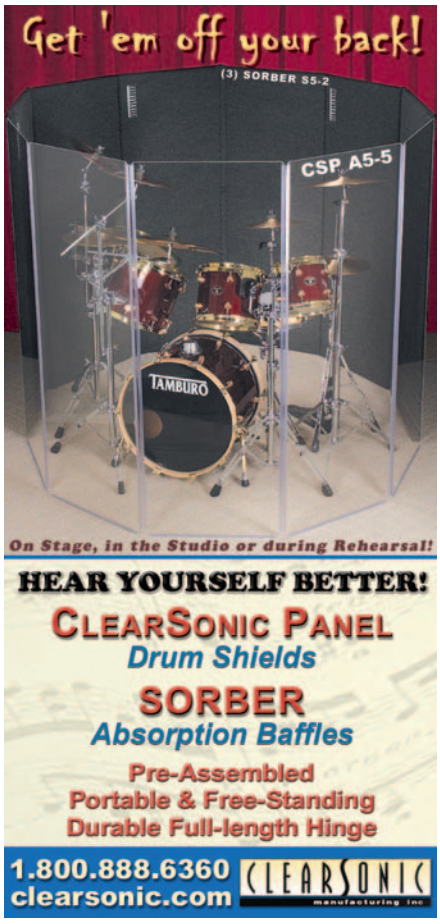
Editor's note: Istanbul Agop Mel Lewis and Alchemy Custom cymbals are reviewed in this issue's Product Close-Up.



Kudos To Kenny

Last night I had the privilege of seeing Kenny Aronoff in clinic in Indianapolis. After a very nice introduction by Harry Cangany, Kenny came out and wowed the attendees with his magic. He is, to say the least, quite an impressive drummer. But Kenny really impressed me most *after* the clinic, when he took time to greet everyone who wanted to speak with him. He signed sticks, cymbals, pictures, drumheads, and anything else that was presented to him. And he did it with grace, style, and his typical self-deprecating humor.

Most pleasing of all was to see how Kenny treated the kids in attendance—giving them his full attention and lots of encouragement. Next to meeting Keith Moon almost a lifetime ago, this has to be my best "drum moment" ever.

Mike Hanson
Indianapolis, IL

Thanks To Tyler

The Barenaked Ladies played in my hometown recently. I went to the venue early, hoping to meet Tyler Stewart and talk with him about drumming. When I saw Tyler about to board the band's bus I yelled his name, and he graciously walked over to me. I brought along the February 2001 *MD* that featured him and I asked him to autograph the cover for me. We talked about his drumming and his Ayotte drums. He seemed very pleased to hear my comments about his kit.

My friends and I were lucky enough to get third-row tickets for the show. About halfway through the show, Tyler's eyes met with mine. He looked down from behind his drums, nodded his head, and smiled as if to say hello. At the end of the show, when he was tossing drumsticks out to the crowd, he walked over to where we were standing, threw me a stick, and waved. What a cool way to end my night!

I hope Tyler reads this letter so I can thank him for the wonderful day. It was something that I'll never forget.

Mike Intelisano

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Gene Lake On Time And Touch

Q I'm a huge fan of your playing, especially with Steve Coleman. How did you learn to groove so well in odd times? It sounds like it's effortless for you. Also, I saw you recently in Cambridge with The Screaming Headless Torsos. Your touch seemed very light, yet your sound was very big. Any tips on that? You're an inspiration to all drummers. Keep up the great work.

Jeremy
via Internet

A Thanks for all the kind words. When I first joined Steve Coleman & The Five Elements, I listened to what Marvin "Smitty" Smith had played in that band before me. There was a concept already in place for me to emulate. That concept was that as the drummer I could improvise and complement the soloist however I wanted, as long as I stayed in the time signature of the tune.

Initially I'd try things and fall on my face. Then I started to grab other parts within the tune to anchor me, like bass lines or guitar parts that I could play off of. Later, Steve introduced me to singing the parts in my head while playing. That was, and still is, a way for me to access playing in odd time signatures.

When you play in odd times a lot, you start to internalize the part you're singing in your head. It's through this process that the playing becomes smoother—at least for me. I don't have to *think* about the time as much as just about the music I'm dealing with. The longer I stayed with that group and got my execution together, the more I was able to put my mind on what I wanted to play and be more creative.

As for my light touch and big sound, basically it comes down to stick control. I use a Vic Firth SD4, which is a very light stick. I use Gorilla Snot to help me hold the stick, and I grip the stick at the end of the shaft to get a big sound. The stick is doing a lot of the work. Good luck!

Joe Morello Takes Five

Q The sound of your drums on Dave Brubeck's legendary *Time Out* recording is quite beautiful. I'm particularly amazed with the bass drum on "Take Five." How did you get such a sound? I can hear the room, but tell me about the tuning—did you use any muffling at all? And how were your drums miked?

Denis Benarrosh
Paris, France

A Thanks for the kind words. "Take Five" was recorded close to forty years ago, and my memory is not perfect. But I'll try to answer your questions to the best of my recollection.

At that time, I was playing a Ludwig kit with 9x13 and 16x16 toms, a 5x14 snare, and a 14x22 bass drum. I think I was using plastic heads by then. In general, I follow no specific tuning pattern, but rather I try to tune each drum for maximum resonance. For that, the top and bottom heads on each drum should be in tune with each other. Then I try to ensure that there is a musical pitch relationship between all the drums. The sizes of each drum will somewhat dictate the musical intervals between each drum in the set. I usually tune the snare drum in an interval, with the snare-side head about a fourth higher than the batter head. (Think of the first two notes in the song "Here Comes The Bride.")

As with the snare, I tune the front head of the bass drum tighter. That's where the pitch comes from. I use a moleskin patch where the beater strikes, and I used a wood beater in those days. In general, I prefer to use a one-piece or flat-footboard bass drum pedal, as opposed to one with a separate heel plate and footboard. I also prefer nylon straps versus chain drive. I bounce the beater off the head rather than "burying" it, and the strap-drive pedal gives me a more natural rebound off the head.

continued on page 16

Add some flavor to your groove

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The only muffling I use now—as I did then—is a standard felt strip placed against the batter head, running from top to bottom of the drum, on the left side about halfway between the middle and the outside of the drum. I can't precisely remember how the drums were miked for the "Take Five" session. However, I don't recall that anything different from what was typical for that day was done in terms of mic' placement.

All of this being said, please keep in mind that different drummers can play the same kit and sound completely different. This comes from the way the drummer plays, whether he hits the drum hard or softly, how much and at what angle he puts the bead of the stick on the head, whether he "buries" the beater or rebounds it off the head, and many other factors.

I hope this helps. Thanks again for your question.

Repeat Bar

A Classic Quote From MD's Past

"I'll bump into people who say, 'Aw, I used to play the drums, but I sold my set.' And I think, 'How could you do that? Are you insane?'"

Dave Grohl, March 2000

Would you like to ask your favorite drummer a question? Send it to Ask A Pro, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Rd., Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Or you may email rvh@moderndrummer.com. We will do our best to pursue every inquiry.

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Pedal Squeaks

Q I purchased a Gibraltar Intruder II double bass pedal about four years ago. I really like its solid feel and virtually "bulletproof" construction. Although the pedal is still in like-new condition, I've recently started noticing a squeak that becomes annoying very quickly. What can I do to get rid of this squeak?

Tim Rosser
via Internet

A Most pedal squeaks can be eliminated by cleaning and lubricating the pedal. We don't suggest that you disassemble the pedal, but you can spray it with WD-40 to loosen and remove dust and dirt. Wipe the pedal thoroughly to remove the dirt (and the WD-40). Use Q-tips and toothpicks to get into all possible cracks and crevices.

You may find that the WD-40 provides enough lubrication to eliminate the squeak. If not, we suggest an application of a silicone-based lubricant. Don't use Vaseline or any sort of heavy grease; they tend to attract and hold dirt.

Combining Electronic Percussion Sound Sources

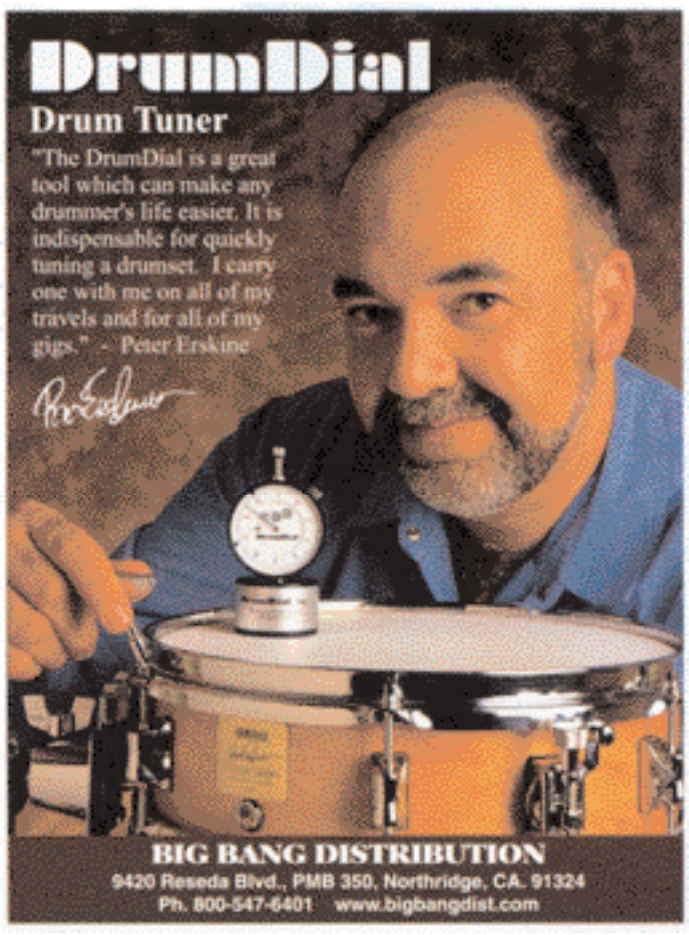
Q Is it possible to access Roland TD5 sounds from a Yamaha DTXPRESS or vice versa using MIDI? I bought a TD5 kit and added a DTXPRESS module and hi-hat controller. I like the drum sounds on the TD5 and the cymbal sounds on the DTXPRESS. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

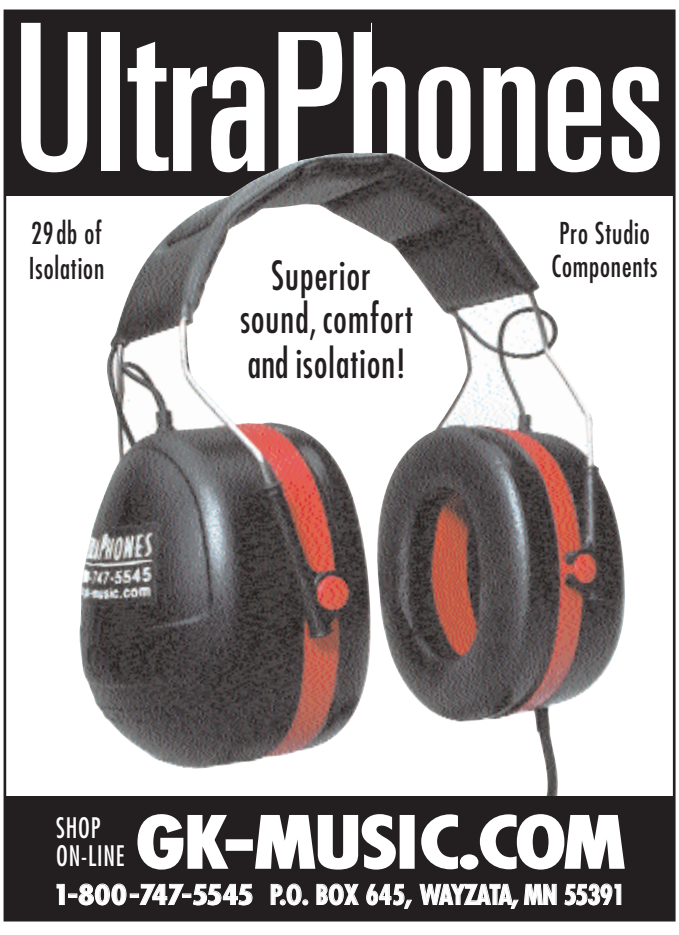
James Evangelos
via Internet

A *MD* electronic percussion columnist Rick Long replies: "There are two ways to accomplish your goal: the hard way and the easy way.

The hard way is to use MIDI to achieve split control of two modules. For illustrative purposes, let's use the generic names "CYM Module" for the module with the best cymbal sounds and "DRUM Module" for the module with the best drum sounds. Let's say you want to use the CYM Module for your main setup—the one to which your drum and cymbal pads are connected. After doing a bit of reading in the manual, set up the CYM Module so that your cymbal pads generate the sounds you want, while the drum pads are programmed to "No Voice." Run a cord from the audio output to your mixer or amp. You now have the cymbal sounds ready to play.

The drum pads connected to the CYM Module should send out a MIDI note number when you hit them, even if the voice selection is set to "No Voice." Run a MIDI cable from the CYM Module's MIDI OUT to the DRUM Module's MIDI IN. You'll need to change the MIDI note numbers of





one of the modules so that the drum and cymbal note numbers match. For example, let's say that when you hit the snare drum pad connected to the CYM Module, that module plays MIDI note number 36. Since you set note 36 to sound like "No Voice," no sound will come out of that module. The MIDI note will travel over to the DRUM Module and fire off note 36—which you just set to "phat snare 1."

Remember to set the DRUM Module so that the MIDI note numbers for the cymbals are set to "No Voice." This will keep you from having cymbal sounds occurring from both modules.

The key to this entire operation is to first make sure your modules allow you to change the MIDI note number assignments. This function is usually found in the "trigger settings" area. But it's not available on some lower-cost modules, and there's no guarantee that the MIDI note number assignments will match between two modules of different brands. They *should* match if you use preset "General MIDI" kits, but they still might not.

The *easy* way to achieve your goal is to play the hi-hat (as most drummers do), there is no particular advantage to playing the ride cymbal on that side as well. In fact, there might be a slight disadvantage, since the crossover is a somewhat awkward position, and can be fatiguing to maintain for long periods of time. The reason most drummers play their rides on the right side (assuming that they are right-handed) is that it is the most comfortable and accessible position for sustained playing. A crash can be almost anywhere, since you aren't going to play it for a long time at a stretch.

Left-Side Ride Placement

Q I put my ride cymbal on my left, next to my hi-hats, and my crash cymbal on the other side. I've been thinking of switching the two, and I'd like to know the advantages and disadvantages of each positioning method. Also, do any famous drummers set up their kits with their rides on the left?

kornblows
via Internet

In the mid-1980s Rayford Griffin, then drumming with Jean-Luc Ponty, helped popularize the idea of left-hand lead on the hi-hat and ride cymbal.

A Several notable drummers set their rides and hi-hats on the same side, such as you describe. Most of them do it because they play ride patterns with their left hands (what's known as left-hand lead). Carter Beauford, Simon Phillips, Rayford Griffin, Billy Cobham, and Lenny White play this way. Playing in this way eliminates the need to cross the right hand over to the left side, thereby opening up the drummer's access to other parts of the kit.

If you do *not* play left-hand lead, but rather cross your right hand over your left

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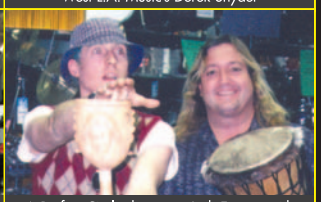
Motorhead drummer, Mikkey Dee, with West L.A. Music drum manager, Glenn Noyes


A Perfect Circle drummer, Josh Freese, with West L.A. Music drum manager, Glenn Noyes

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for drum sounds, and the DTXPRESS for cymbal sounds. Just plug the drum pads into the TD5 and the cymbal pads into the DTXPRESS. This arrangement even frees up some inputs on each module so you can add more drums and cymbals to your setup. Very cool.

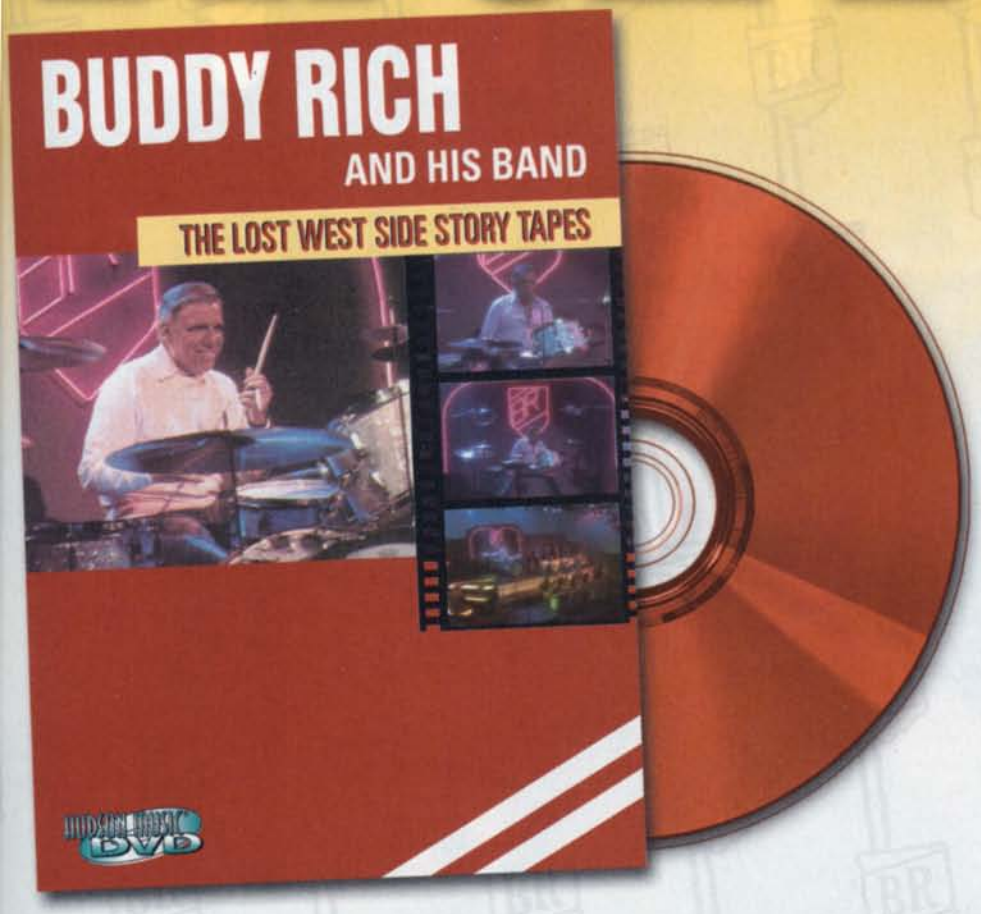
Vega's China Cymbal

Q The late Carlos Vega used a riveted China cymbal to record some of the beautiful music on James Taylor's *Hourglass* album. Can you provide any details on exactly what that cymbal was?

Darren Ashford
via Internet

A According to Paiste's Rich Mangicaro, that cymbal was a 20" Signature thin China with approximately ten rivets. The rivets were spread evenly around the cymbal, set about $1\frac{1}{2}$" in from the edge.

BR on DVD!



The Lost West Side Story Tapes

A special edition DVD featuring Buddy Rich and his band.

Hudson Music's latest drum DVD, "Buddy Rich: The Lost West Side Story Tapes", features a classic, 60 minute performance by the legendary Rich and his big band that has never been released to the home video market. The DVD also includes never-before-seen interview segments and behind-the-scenes footage, plus:

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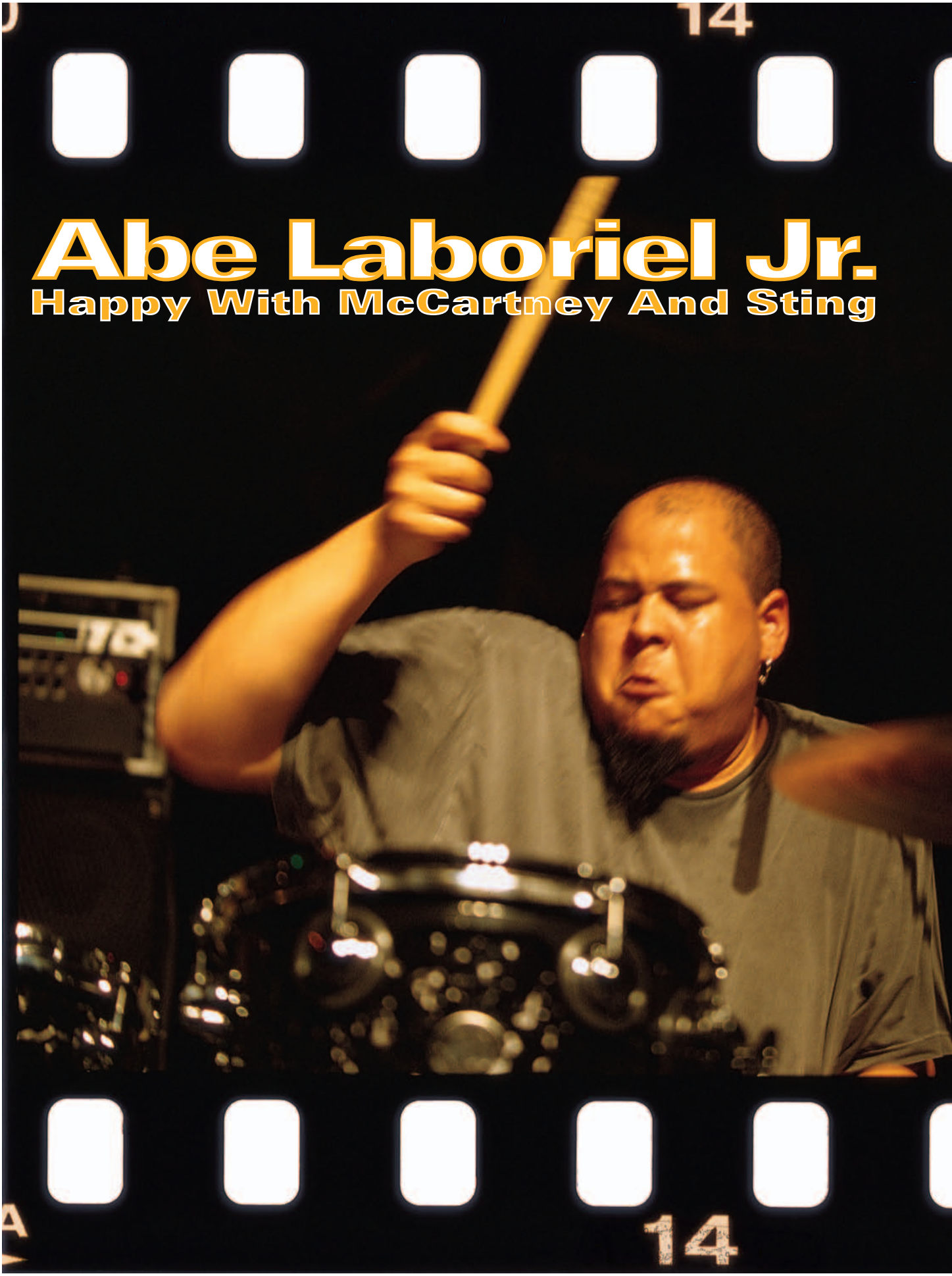
Abe Laboriel Jr.

Happy With McCartney And Sting



Abe Laboriel Jr. was floating on air shortly after the VH1 airing of the Concert For New York, where he performed with Paul McCartney. "You will never get that many amazing people on the stage ever again—and I really hope there never is a reason for it," Abe says. "There was such a feeling of camaraderie. Everybody was there for the right reasons."

Laboriel had already done the recently released album *Driving Rain* with the former Beatle, which he was asked to do by producer David Kahne. "I had never worked with David," Abe admits, "but we had met a few times and talked about music. Then out of the blue he called me up and asked how I'd feel about doing a Paul McCartney record. It was an unbelievable leap of faith on his part to include me in such an amazing opportunity."

Laboriel describes McCartney as an "absolute gentleman," and says that within five minutes of meeting him, the musicians were recording the first song. "He purposely didn't send out any demos and said he wanted to go back to the days of his old band—show up, learn a song, and record it," Abe says. "Paul showed up with a little cassette recorder with a built-in speaker and played a song that was just him playing guitar and singing. Then he said, 'Oh, I've got to write a bridge for it.' So he ran upstairs, wrote the bridge, and came back five minutes later and played it for us!"

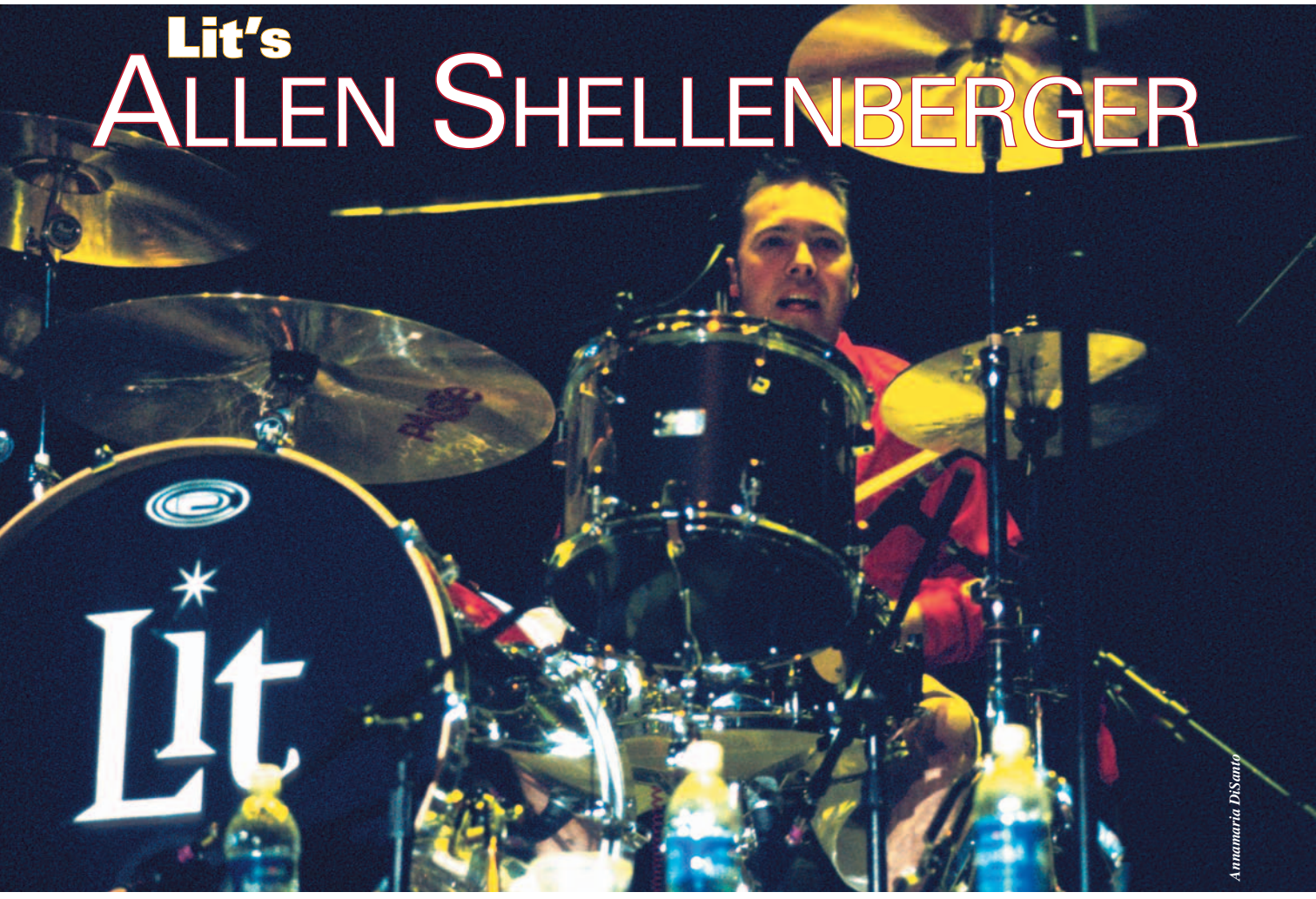
Laboriel went a little retro on the gear for *Driving Rain*. "I used a Ludwig kit that Paul had," he says. "It was a copy of one of Ringo's old kits. It was a beautiful-sounding old-school drumkit."

According to Abe, McCartney's attitude in the studio was remarkable. "I showed up and we were off and running," he says, "maybe doing two or three takes of each song and that was it. We recorded eighteen songs in a very short time. Paul's attitude was so wide-open. He didn't come in with any preconceived notions. It kind of put us all on a level playing field. Everybody's ideas were tried, and it was a purely creative experience."

A week before the New York concert, Laboriel got a phone call from Sting to promote his recent album, *All This Time*, Manu Katche's last effort with the performer. "Manu sounds wonderful on it," Abe says, "so it's been a blast learning his parts and trying to copy his bits. So all of a sudden I've been with another one of my idols. Obviously Sting has had incredible drummers, so the thing I try to add is just an energy of joy. I've been having a blast. I'm the happiest I've ever been."

Robyn Flans

Lit's Allen Shellenberger



Annamaria DiSanto

King Of Orange County

When *MD* caught up with Allen Shellenberger of Lit, the band was taking a well-deserved break. Lit had been on the road for nearly *two years* in support of their hit album *A Place In The Sun.* Now they've released *Atomic*, their fourth album.

Lit's success is the result of years of hard work. Shellenberger has put in plenty of time perfecting the skill of blasting away at the drums while keeping a solid groove. "I think it was after we recorded our first record that I heard myself and said, Oh Man! My timing sucks! I realized that I needed to work on that. So I went out and bought a Dr. Beat and started playing along. I learned how to stray from the click while playing with a band. If you practice long enough with a click, you can make it feel spontaneous without sounding like a machine. I enjoy playing with and without it. It just depends on the song."

Allen's drumming on *Atomic* is a primer for young straight-ahead arena rockers. The band prides itself on its energetic, fun approach, and Shellenberger definitely sets the tone.

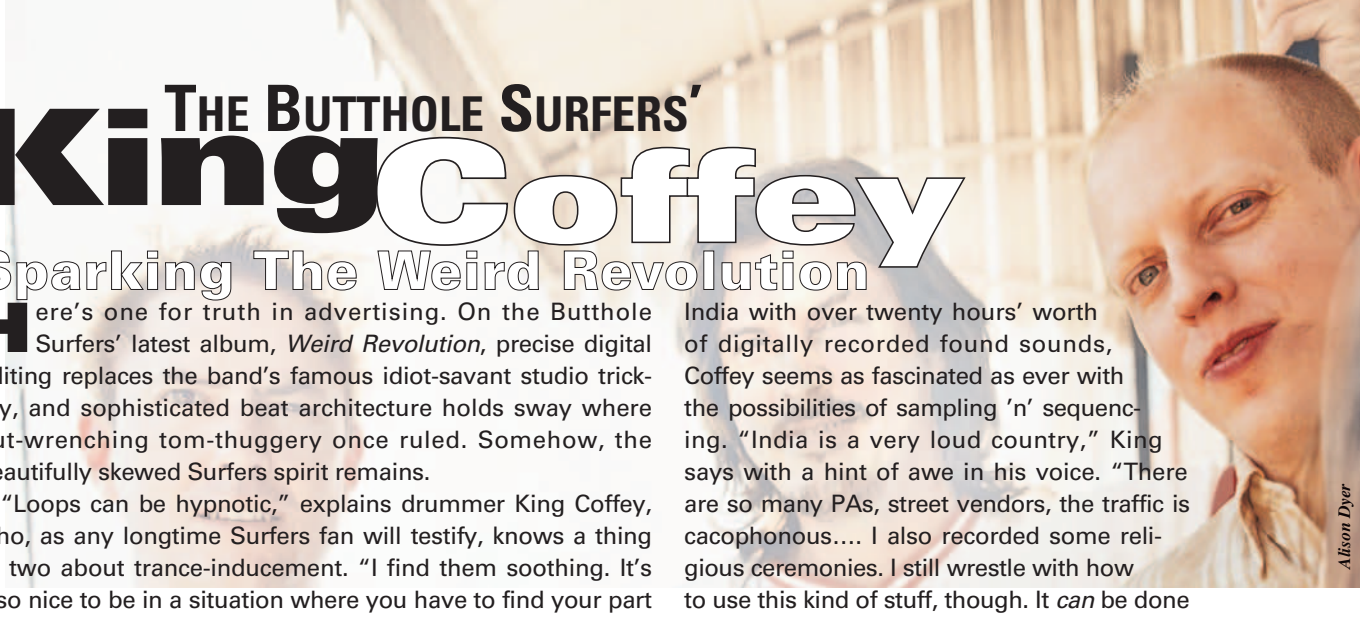
Like many bands, Lit found themselves on the road the week of September 11. The events of that day cast a shadow over their tour, but the band actually found solace for themselves and fans on stage. "We didn't want to be disrespectful. But at the same time, it's something that we love to do, and it's a release," explains Allen. "Right after we got off stage we went to talk to the kids, and they were just stoked to be out of the house for a couple of hours."

Shellenberger's future drumming plans are indicative of his back-to-basics approach. "I'm not going to be a big jazz guy...I love jazz, but it's just not what I do. I still need to learn how to play all the Zeppelin licks, you know?"

Ted Bonar

The Butthole Surfers' King Coffey

Sparking The Weird Revolution


Alison Dyer

Here's one for truth in advertising. On the Butthole Surfers' latest album, *Weird Revolution*, precise digital editing replaces the band's famous idiot-savant studio trickery, and sophisticated beat architecture holds sway where gut-wrenching tom-thuggery once ruled. Somehow, the beautifully skewed Surfers spirit remains.

"Loops can be hypnotic," explains drummer King Coffey, who, as any longtime Surfers fan will testify, knows a thing or two about trance-inducement. "I find them soothing. It's also nice to be in a situation where you have to find your part within the musical scheme, rather than dictate what the rhythm should be. As a drummer it's liberating too, because you know that you can go off on a tangent and you won't sabotage the groove if you come back in a little off."

Coffey's move to electronics is more accurately an *evolution*, rather than an abrupt about-face. "Several years ago I began my solo project Drain as a way to start working with computers," King explains. "But the Surfers started doing the same thing on our albums, which sort of made Drain obsolete. So for the next Drain record," Coffey adds with a laugh, "I think I'll just be like the drummer in a psychedelic band—completely analog!"

Fat chance. After coming home from an "aural safari" in India with over twenty hours' worth of digitally recorded found sounds, Coffey seems as fascinated as ever with the possibilities of sampling 'n' sequencing. "India is a very loud country," King says with a hint of awe in his voice. "There are so many PAs, street vendors, the traffic is cacophonous.... I also recorded some religious ceremonies. I still wrestle with how to use this kind of stuff, though. It *can* be done inappropriately. On the other hand, we're all citizens of the world. So I think it's okay to use some things as long as you're not mocking the sample's source."

Surfer fan alert: Make sure to see them on tour, as second guitarist Josh Klinghoffer moves to drums on several songs. This allows the band to play material they haven't touched since Theresa Nervosa left the group's second drum seat empty a decade ago. And drummers, get close to the stage. King's V-Drum setup is housed in industrial-looking "drum shells." Visually, this neatly bridges the gap between techno and tribal, a musical zone the Surfers have ruled, in one form or another, for years.

Adam Budofsky

Richie Hayward

Recreational Rockin'

Enjoying a few days off after a six-month tour with Little Feat, Richie Hayward was pleased—and a bit surprised—to talk about Endangered Species, a recent band project with Allman Brothers/Phil Lesh guitarist Jimmy Herring, Dixie Dregs/Jazz Is Dead keyboardist T Lavitz, and Little Feat bassist Kenny Gradney. "We didn't have any commercial intentions for this band," Hayward admits. "We just wanted to get together and make some music we liked; it was just about playing. Honestly, I expected it to kind of fall between the cracks and never be heard. It's nice that people might actually be hearing it."

Due to the players' commitments to their respective steady gigs, the band's self-titled debut album was written, recorded, and mixed in just nine days. On Tone Center Records, an imprint of Shrapnel, *Endangered Species*' nine inspired tracks bear unmistakable Dregs and Allman compositional markings, as well as some strong, free-wheeling grooves by Hayward. "The material is all instrumental, and not so 'song-ish' as some of the stuff I do. So it gave me a little more latitude to express myself," Richie says. "The feel and the space between the instruments was just lovely. That was its allure. Also, they're such great players."

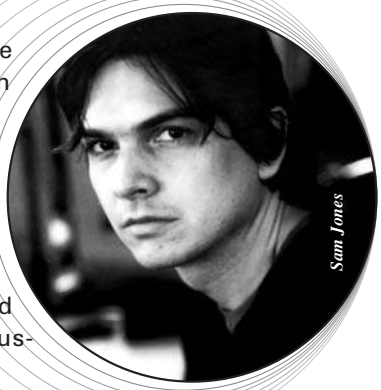
Richie's favorite track, aptly titled "Headstrong," features some uncharacteristically bashing drum work. "I got to do my John Bonham impersonation on that one," he quips. "Lockwood Folley," which starts in 5/4 and then alternates between five and six, was the disk's most challenging tune for him, and another of his favorites. Other tracks on the stylistically diverse yet cohesive-sounding venture range from the fusion-y hoe-down "Justice" and slow, soulful "The Gospel Truth," to the New Orleans-flavored "Camel Lope."

Although Richie's professional plans continue to revolve around Little Feat, he hopes that Endangered Species isn't a one-time project. "There won't be a lot of road stuff, because all of us are busy in our bands," he explains. "But we'll probably do more records. Mike Varney at Shrapnel Records is real supportive, and the door is open to us to tour if we can all find the time."

Rich Watson

Glenn Kotche

Wilco's Sonic Maestro



Climb around the back of Glenn Kotche's drumset in Wilco's rehearsal loft/recording studio on the northwest side of Chicago, and what you'll see is part hardware store and part orchestra percussion pit.

"In-Glenn-tions," bandleader Jeff Tweedy calls the array of high- and low-tech noisemakers. Recruited to expand the sonic palette of the leading band in alternative country, Kotche augments his four-piece kit with a specially made compact vibraphone, contact mic's linking the drums to effects units, floor tiles, gongs, a hub cap, crotales, ping-pong balls filled with shotgun pellets, and a length of rubber tubing feeding into the air hole on the floor tom. (Kotche blows into it to change the pitch of the head for a timpani effect.)

A native of Chicago's western suburbs, this inventive drummer started playing as a tot, performed in drum corps through high school, and studied percussion at the University of Kentucky. He returned home to teach high schoolers by day while gigging with underground heroes like avant-garde guitarist Jim O'Rourke and singer-songwriters Edith Frost and Paul Kaye by night.

"I played with a lot of singer-songwriters when I moved back to Chicago, because a lot of drummers couldn't play quietly," Kotche recalls. "I was using brushes and a two-piece kit—a snare and a floor tom with the pedal underneath—but I would only play with people whose lyrics I liked. There are a lot of bad singer-songwriters, and if I'm going to play minimally behind somebody, I want it to be something I'm proud of."

Hailed as a songsmith by none other than Bob Dylan, Tweedy certainly fits that bill. Kotche first played with Wilco's leader in an improvisational side project. Early in the recording of the band's fourth album, *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*, he was asked to join the group. "I've always looked at whatever parts I play like a keyboard part or a guitar part instead of, What beat should I play on this song?" the thirty-year-old drummer says. "I guess that comes from the orchestra stuff, and the most successful I've been at that is the Wilco record."

Jim DeRogatis

Tommy Aldridge

Double Bass Lives On

Fifty-year-old drum great Tommy Aldridge first came to prominence with '70s Southern-rock hooligans Black Oak Arkansas, although you wouldn't know that by visiting his current Web site (www.tommyaldridge.com). B.O.A. is only grudgingly referred to as "that band" in Aldridge's online biography. "I had some real problems with that bunch when I left," notes Aldridge from his home in Santa Barbara, California. "They tied me up in court for over a year, and caused me all kinds of problems. So I figured I'd give them as little exposure as possible."

While Aldridge's musical career was made to suffer early on from an unnamed manager's "Napoleon complex," things have certainly been all positive from there. While backing some of the biggest names in guitar-rock from the '70s to today—including Pat Travers, Ozzy Osbourne, Whitesnake, and latter-day Thin Lizzy—Tommy has carved out a name for himself as a player to watch, partially due to his mastery of the double bass drum setup.

Tommy developed a thrashy, aggressive playing style that has made him a favorite of fellow drummers and hard-rock fans alike, to the point where he is much in demand as a drum clinician. Tommy recently headed off to Canada to present a clinic at the Vancouver International Drum Festival. Clinics aren't Tommy's favorite thing to do, though. "I guess it's better than a jab in the ass with a frozen carrot," he jokes. "I like going to them, but it's kinda pressurized, because all these drummers are there and they're kind of in 'impress me' mode. I'm known for flamboyant solos and things like that, so when I go to those things, people expect a lot."

Although he had to undergo surgery for a torn rotator cuff six months ago, right after touring with Thin Lizzy, Aldridge claims that he's back in fighting shape as far as performing goes. "I'm up to full velocity and torque now," he reports. "But it was a real exercise in patience for me, because I'd been working solid for about two and a half years without a break, and all of a sudden I went from playing five or six nights a week and bicycling three hundred fifty miles a week to doing zero. So that part of it was a lot more challenging than the pain."

Steve Newton

Kit Talk

With Son Volt's Mike Heidorn

Mike Heidorn's Ludwig drumkit dates back to the year he was born: 1967. In keeping with those times, the drums are psychedelic red with white pearl inlay. "I got them in high school," he says, "and I've used them in some capacity on all six albums I've done—three with Uncle Tupelo and three with Son Volt."

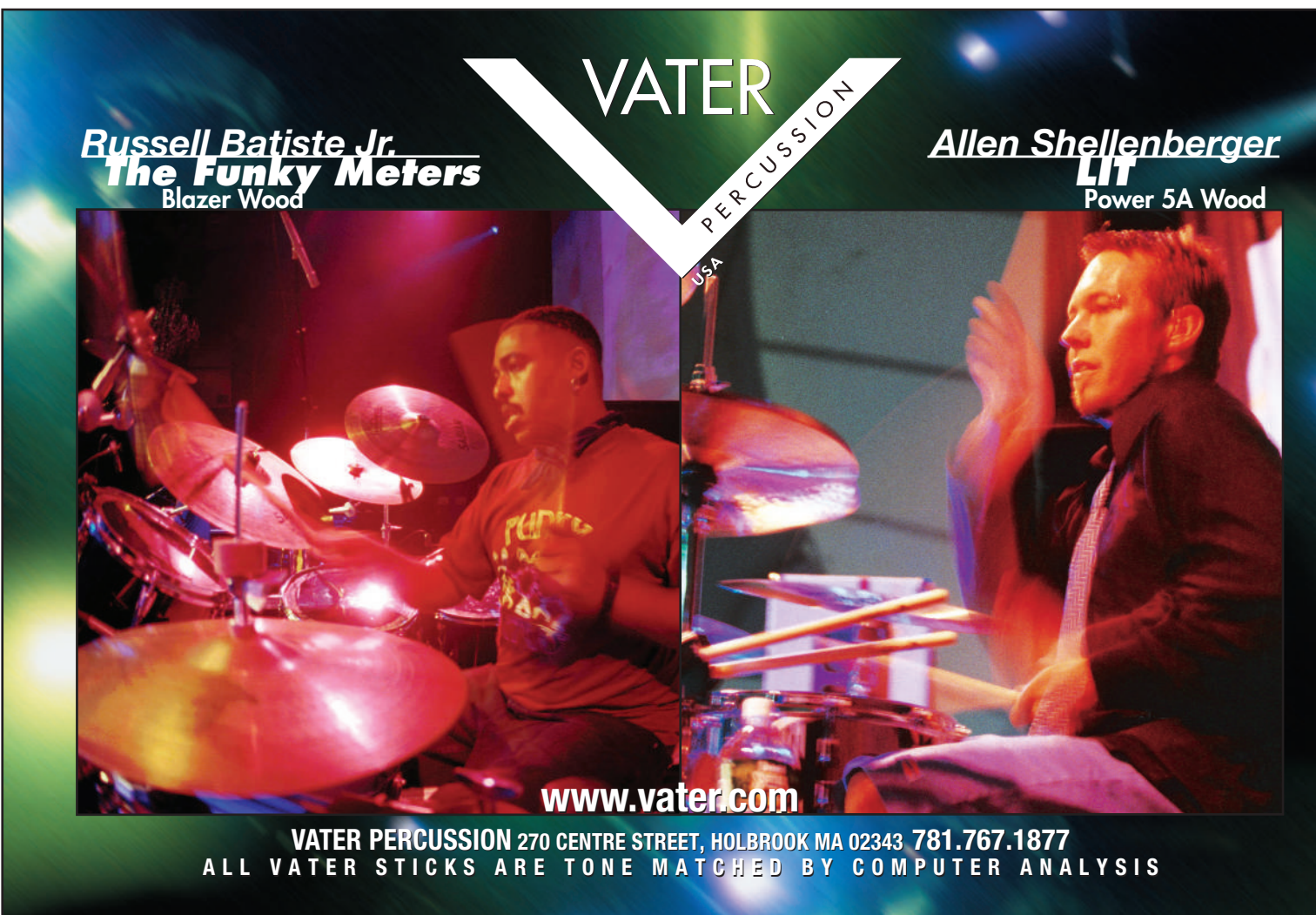
While touring in support of Son Volt's latest, *Wide Swing Tremelo*, Heidorn hooked up with Mapex drums on the advice of former Wilco drummer Ken Coomer. "Mapex sent me a brand-new set from their Orion Maple series," Mike says. "Having never worked with a new set before, I was astonished by the sound quality. But we're sort of known for playing vintage gear. I felt torn between using the new gear or the old stuff."

Well, the gear decision was made *for* Heidorn, when on the last leg of Son Volt's tour someone broke into their van and stole all of their instruments. "They got our front line and backups—all of it," Heidorn says, clearly upset by the theft. "I'm still kind of traumatized by it."

Now Heidorn is back playing a '60s Ludwig kit and occasionally using an even older Gretsch set. "It's got a jazzy 20" kick, 14" floor, and 12" rack. I can't date it, though. I talked to the Memphis Drum Shop guys, and they guessed it's from the early '60s."

In other Heidorn career news, Sony/Legacy plans to reissue Uncle Tupelo's *Rockville* album including bonus tracks and outtakes, beginning with an anthology scheduled for release shortly.

Chris Orlet



Slim Jim Phantom

The Cat Is Back

Although Slim Jim Phantom's former bandmate Brian Setzer has kept the Stray Cats name in gear since the band dissolved in the mid-1980s, the stand-up drummer best remembered for his simple two-piece kit in the "Rock This Town" video hasn't kept out of the music scene. On the contrary, the father and club owner has a new assemblage of all-star rockers, called Colonel Parker, which includes former Guns N' Roses guitarist Gilby Clarke.

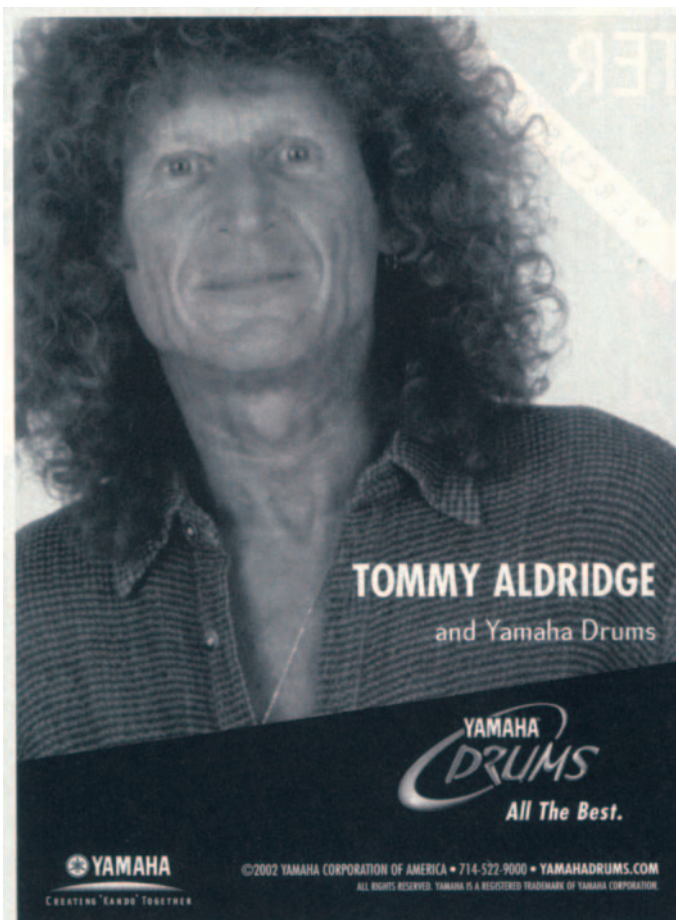
"I've known Gilby for a little while," Phantom says. "I was doing this thing at my club on Thursday nights—I own a club on Sunset Boulevard called The Cat Club—and I was doing a jam night. One week the regular guys couldn't make it, so someone suggested I call Gilby. I called, he came, and it was fun—so much so that we decided to keep doing it. I found a kindred spirit with him."

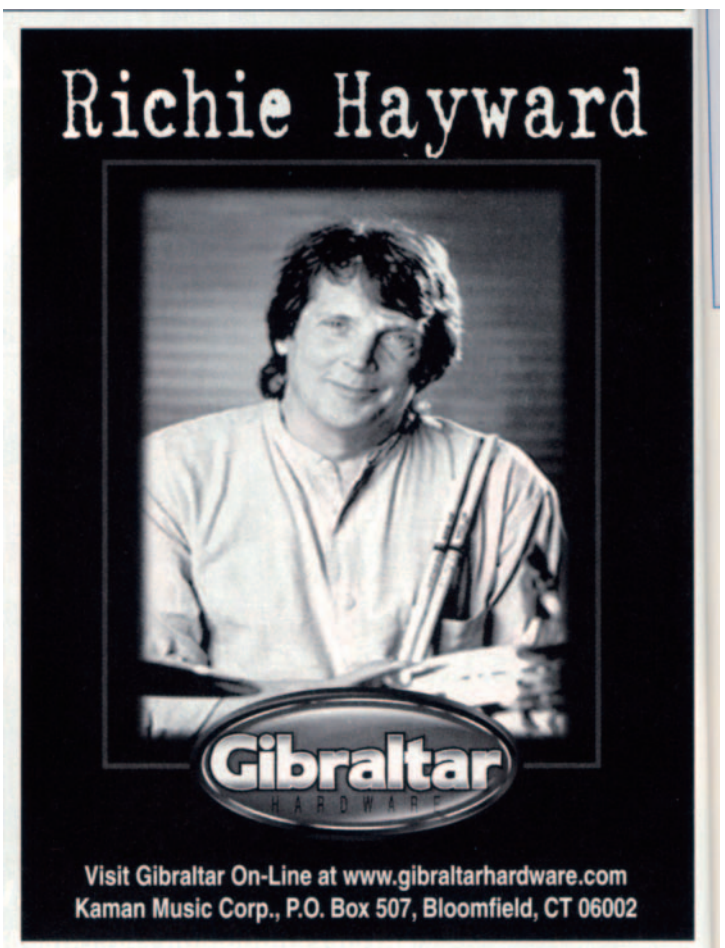
From there, Phantom's newfound bond with Clarke turned into a band and, a little later down the line, an album on Icon Records. "Icon came down and took Gilby and me out to dinner—and you never pass on a free dinner in LA. They said they wanted to capture what we do live on record," Slim Jim says. "We were like, 'Basically we just kind of goof off.' We just have fun up there. But they saw something in it that we didn't see."

Although it appears as if Phantom jumped on the idea, he admits there were plenty of reservations about forming another band. "Lee Rocker [former Stray Cat bassist] and I made a couple of records, and I'd been doing a lot of sessions, running my club, and raising my kid. But the last thing I was looking for was to be in a band and do the whole thing all over again. But I also never expected to get a record deal from playing at my own club on a Thursday night, ya know?"

Spawning from the new act and album is a new drum—the Slim Jim Phantom signature snare drum, to be exact. "Peace drums is a really cool, up-and-coming company, and they worked on the snare drum with me," Slim Jim says. "We used the old Ludwig Black Beauty as inspiration, but went in our own direction. It's kind of cool to start from square one on an instrument and see what you can come up with."

Waleed Rashidi





NEWS

Matt Sorum, Michael Lee, Scott Garrett, Nigel Preston, Les Warner, and **Mark Brzezicki** can all be heard (and sometimes seen) on *Pure Cult: The Cult Anthology 1984–1995*.

Kenny Aronoff has been recording with Meat Loaf. He's also on recent records by Willie Nelson, Michelle Branch, Black Lab, Mick Jagger, Alice Cooper, and Andy Griggs.

Peter Erskine is on Doug Robinson's *SitJazzDown*. The disc is available at www.dougrobinson.com.

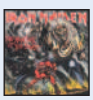
Peter Donald is a busy jazz and studio drummer who made waves most notably with John Abercrombie's quartet. Donald makes a welcome return with 3 Prime, featuring electric bassist Abe Laboriel and pianist Tom Rainier, on the trio's second eponymous CD.

Bernard Purdie and **Rick Marotta** are on the reissue of R&B great Howard Tate's self-titled 1972 album.

Harvey Mason is on the new album by Robert Walter's 20th Congress, *There Goes The Neighborhood*.

Emil Richards has a new album out called *Luniana Afro Cuban Jazz* with **Joe Porcaro** on drums and a bunch of wonderful percussionists including **Francisco Aquabella**, **Luis Conte**, and **Efrain Toro**.

Al Webster is in the midst of Amanda Marshall's *Everybody's Got A Story* world tour with **Jose Sanchez** on percussion.



Recently out is a Classic Albums DVD of *The Number Of The Beast*, a documentary about Iron Maiden's 1982 release, the first album with Bruce Dickinson as leader. Drummer **Clive Burr** is on this album. (He left the band after the tour for the album.)

Jerome Dillon can be heard on Nine Inch Nails' new release, *Nine Inch Nails Live: And All That Could Have Been*.

Brian Frasier Moore is touring with Janet Jackson.

Steve Reid recently released his fifth solo CD, *Dream Scapes*.

Jason Bowld is on Pitchshifter's anticipated April 2002 debut release for Sanctuary Records.

Adolfo "Fofi" Lancha is the drummer for a new Univision Network show called *Don Francisco*.

Roger Squitero is working with Luther Vandross.

Jon Bermuda Schwartz is in the studio with Weird Al.

Matt Laug is on Carly Hennessy's *Ultimate High*.

Frank Russo burns on The Pete Barenbregge/Frank Russo Quartet's new acoustic jazz long-player, *PF Flyer*.

MB Gordy has been working alongside Keith Knudsen in The Doobie Brothers since Michael Hossack's terrible motorcycle accident last summer. They've asked him to stay on even when Hossack is back in gear.

Vinnie Colaiuta and **Abe Laboriel Jr.** can both be heard on Chris Botti's Columbia debut, *Night Sessions*.

Brendan Buckley is on Shakira's *Laundry Service*, DMX's *Great Depression*, and Alejandra Guzman's *Soy*. He is also currently on tour with

DRUM DATES

This month's important events in drumming history

Tito Puente was born on April 20, 1923.

Robbie McIntosh (Average White Band) was born on April 25, 1950.

Jeff Porcaro was born on April 1, 1954.

Buddy Rich passed away on April 2, 1987.

Cozy Powell was killed in a car crash on April 5, 1998.

Carlos Vega passed away on April 7, 1998.

Charlie Watts and The Rolling Stones release their debut album on April 26, 1964.

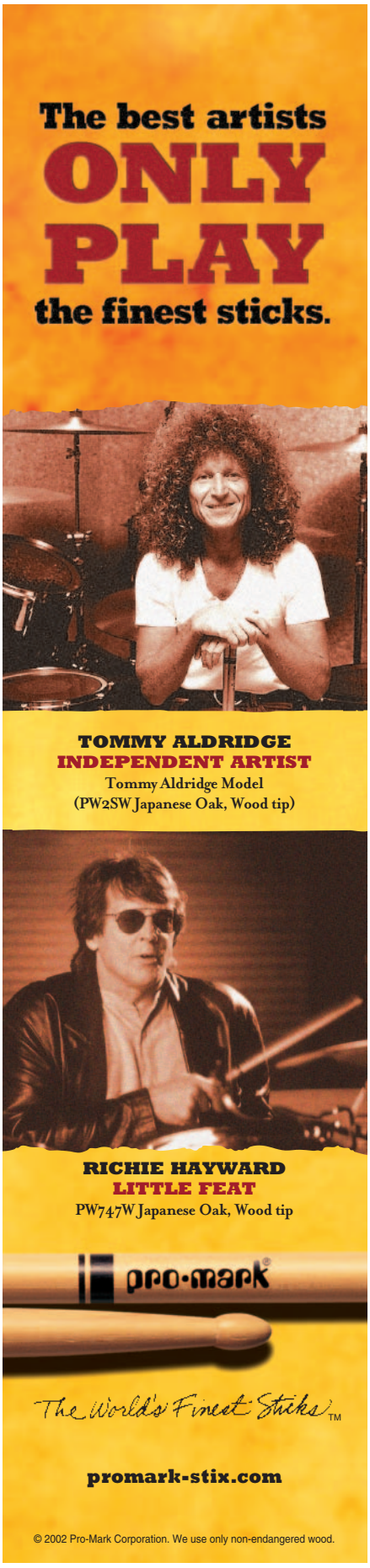
Deep Purple (with **Ian Paice**) performs their first concert on April 20, 1968 in Tastrup, Denmark, just outside of Copenhagen.

Don Lombardi opens a teaching studio called Drum Workshop in Santa Monica, California in April of 1972.

Mark Herndon joins country super-group Alabama in April of 1979.

Happy Birthday!

Lionel Hampton (April 12, 1909)
Joe Porcaro (April 29, 1930)
Clyde Stubblefield (April 18, 1943)
Steve Gadd (April 9, 1945)
Steve Ferrone (April 25, 1950)
Narada Michael Walden (April 23, 1952)
Ivan Hampden (April 1, 1958)
Denny Fongheiser (April 21, 1959)
Chris Marrs (April 26, 1961)
Stan Frazier (April 23, 1968)
Aaron Comess (April 24, 1968)



When You Want That "Something Special"

Pearl Limited Edition Masters Custom Sets

Drummers who are concerned with looking as well as sounding different might want to check out three new Pearl Limited Edition Masters kits with special finishes and features.

LE Masters Custom Maple MMX kits are finished in a purple/blue high-gloss lacquer called Purple Storm, and are fitted with matte satin chrome hardware, clear Remo Ambassador drumheads, Opti-Mounts, and die-cast hoops. The drums feature 4-ply maple shells with reinforcement rings. Standard kits include 8x10, 9x12, and 11x14 toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a $5^1/_2$x14 snare drum, at a list price of $5,490. Add-on toms in 8x8 and 13x16 sizes are available.

LE Masters Custom Maple MRX sets are finished in Piano Black high-gloss lacquer and outfitted with black chrome hardware over 6-ply maple shells. The LE Masters Studio Birch BRX line is finished in Millennium Silver high-gloss lacquer with micro metallic flakes that change shade depending on the light. The kit is outfitted with matte satin chrome hardware and 6-ply birch shells. Each kit comes equipped with Remo Masterworks–specification white-coated drumheads, Opti-Mounts, and die-cast hoops. Drum sizes include 8x10, 9x12, 11x14, and 13x16 toms, an 18x22 bass drum, and a $5^1/_2$x14 snare drum. The MRX kit is priced at $4,970; the BRX kit is priced at $3,800.

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrum.com.

Dave's Canadian Connection

Sabian HHX Evolution Series

Dave Weckl is particular about every aspect of his drumming. So you had to figure that when he hooked up with Sabian recently, he'd be working with them to create some special cymbals. The result of that collaboration is Sabian's new HHX Evolution Series.

The cymbals feature jumbo hammering, a lathed surface, a raw, unlathed bell, and a glossy brilliant finish. The model range is based on Dave's personal setup. It includes 7", 10", and 12" splashes, 13" and 14" hi-hats, 16", 17", and 18" crashes, and a 20" ride. The series also includes two new effect cymbals: The O-Zone crash is a thin model perforated by large holes, designed to produce a fast, shimmering sound. The Effeks cymbal is a thin/medium-thin model with a turned-down edge. Available with or without rivets, it has the flavor of a crash with oriental overtones.

(506) 272-2019, www.sabian.com.

Get Your Head On Straight

Remo NuSkyn Djembe And Suede Crimped Marching Heads

Remo has expanded the NuSkyn line to include a tucked Vintage-Wrap djembe head as well as a glued version. The head is currently available for 14" rope-tuned or key-tuned djembes; 13" and 15" models are in production.

And for marching drummers seeking the tonal qualities of Remo's Suede drumheads, the company now offers the line in a crimped version. By employing Remo's Crimplock hoops, the heads are reportedly able to offer increased stability and tuning range for high-register drum corps and marching band situations. Heads are available from 6" to 16" in diameter and priced from $20.75 to $30.00.

☎ (661) 294-5600, www.remo.com.

New Flavor...Er, Sound

Drum Workshop Collector's Series Birch Drums And Gong Bass Drum

After focusing on 100% maple drums for the past thirty years, Drum Workshop has introduced Collector's Series Birch drums. The new models feature hand-selected, 6-ply, all-birch drumshells made in the DW factory. The shells are timbre-matched into individual kits, custom-manufactured with precision bearing edges, and finished in a multitude of FinishPly, Satin Oil, lacquer, and Exotic options.

The new birch drums come standard with unreinforced shells "to maximize the tonal characteristics of the alternative wood." However, reinforcing hoops are available as an option.

Also new from DW is a Gong Bass Drum designed in conjunction with Marco Minnemann. The 20" drum features a 10-ply, all-maple shell with a 22" counterhoop and head. The tension lugs have spacers that allow the drum to be evenly tensioned at a uniform 90° angle. The drum comes equipped with brackets for mounting on 9000 series floor stands; floor tom–style legs and brackets are optional. The drum is available in any FinishPly, Satin Oil, lacquer, or Exotic finish. List price is $995 to $1,853, depending on finish and options.

☎ (805) 485-6999, www.dwdrums.com.

Variety Is The Spice...

New Gretsch Snare Range

Gretsch is now offering snare drums in a wide variety of sizes and materials and made with original Gretsch design features. Professional metal-shell models are available in brass, copper, stainless steel, and black chrome steel. Wood models include 10-ply maple shells in natural gloss finishes, along with a limited-edition Red Camphor Exotic finish. Solid 1-ply shells are available in maple, black walnut, rosewood, and oak.

Auxiliary snares are available in 8", 10", and 12" steel or basswood models, and include all necessary mounting hardware.

Additionally, the Kaman Legend Series Free Floating snare drum will be included in the Gretsch snare drum range. All drums come fitted with Permatone heads, high-polished chrome fittings, and die-cast or 2.3-mm Power Hoops. List prices vary depending on material and size.

(860) 509-8888,
www.kamanmusic.com.

Bettering The Beat

Toca Percussion Conga Upgrades

The folks at Toca have been busy upgrading their various conga series. To begin with, the Traditional Series now includes a double conga set that combines an 11" quinto and an $11\frac{3}{4}$" conga on a heavy-duty stand that's plated to match the congas' antique-look brushed-chrome plating. The set is priced at $899.50. A $12\frac{1}{2}$" tumba drum is also available ($415.50), as is a set of matching bongos ($229.50).

Elite Wood Series congas feature 28" sharp-tapered conga shells, Toca's Easy Play hoops, and chrome-plated hardware, and come in a 10" and 11" set at $599.50. A 12" tumba is available ($295), as well as a set of matching bongos ($179.50). Drums are available in Cherry Burst or Honey Brown lacquer finishes.

Elite Fiberglass congas and bongos feature the same specifications as the Wood series, and are available in Silver Black Double Burst and Blue To Purple Burst finishes. Conga set: $525.50, tumba: $275.50, bongos: $179.50.

The entry-level Player's Series now includes a Double Conga Set featuring a 9" quinto and a 10" conga drum outfitted with EasyPlay hoops and four-bolt tension plates. Barrel stands that feature height-adjustable rubber guards are included, and the set is priced at $369.99. A bongo set is also available at $109.99. The drums are available in Shiny Gel Coat Black Finish with plated black textured hardware. (860) 509-8888, www.kamanmusic.com.

Stick 'Em Up

New Pro-Mark Autograph Sticks And Accent Brush

Pro-Mark's Autograph series now includes the TX725W Hilary Jones model (hickory, 16" long, $^{39}/_{64}$" in diameter, with a short taper and a rounded triangular wood tip) and the SD721W Marco Minnemann maple model. Marco's stick (16" long, $^{37}/_{64}$" in diameter, with a wood tip) was introduced last year as a hickory model, which is still available. Both models are priced at $12.45.

In addition, Pro-Mark now offers their new Accent Brush. The model features oak handles and stiff wire bristles designed to offer more attack than traditional brushes.

☎ (800) 233-5250, www.promark-stix.com.

You Can Always Find A Place

Pacific Metal Accessory Snare Drums And LX Series Add-Ons

For drummers looking to add that "special sound" to their kit, Pacific's accessory snare drum line now includes 4x14 steel-shell and 5x14 hammered phosphorus/brass-shell drums. The steel drum is priced at $238; the phosphorus/brass drum goes for $419.

Speaking of adding, owners of Pacific LX drumkits can now add a 7x8 rack-tom ($235), a 14x16 floor-tom ($530), and an 18x22 bass drum ($899). The add-on drums are available in all Pacific lacquer finishes, including Amber, Charcoal, Purple Metallic, Cranberry, Natural, and Royal Blue.

☎ (805) 485-6999, www.pacificdrums.com.

Make Mine A Mini

LP Mini Tunable Congas And Bongos And Cyclops Shakers

LP has added Mini Tunable Congas and Bongos to their LP Music Collection gift line. The drums are scaled-down replicas of standard-size, professional-quality LP Galaxy Fiberglass Congas and Bongos. They feature a gold-flake glitter finish, gold-tone hardware, natural rawhide heads, and LP Comfort Curve II rims, and are priced at $69 each.

LP's new Cyclops Shakers were created in collaboration with percussionist Bashiri Johnson. According to the company, "the uniquely shaped, multi-dimensional shakers offer many more sounds than traditional shakers." They're available in black and red and come in two sizes: small ($24) and large ($36).

☎ (888) LP-MUSIC, www.lpmusic.com.

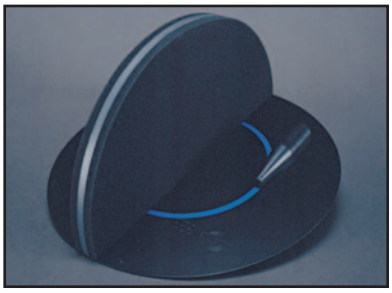
Wanna Shoot Some Loops?

Boss SP-505 Groove Sampling Workstation

If you like to capture your own sounds and build your own loops and patterns, The SP-505 Groove Sampling Workstation should interest you. It's a compact sample-editing machine that features 16 sample pads, a 15,000-note pattern sequencer, storage for 250 individual samples, 8-note polyphony, 124 seconds of mono sampling, 62 seconds of stereo sampling, and 26 onboard effects. The unit also includes ROM tones such as synths, drums, and basses, which can be played without using memory. List price is $595. (800) 386-7575, www.rolandus.com.

Catch The Room

MBHO Microphones Ambient Drumset Mic'



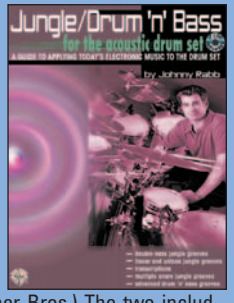
The MBNM-622 Ambient Drumset Mic' from MBHO is a stereo PZM (Pressure Zone Microphone) designed to be placed on the floor or mounted on a wall about six to eight feet away from a drumkit or percussion setup. The mic' features two omnidirectional transducers, and gives the engineer the option to add a "more roomy" drum sound to the mix. List price is $545. MBHO mic's are available through Music Trade Center (MTC) in the US. (718) 963-2777, Nycdrums@aol.com.

The Reference Shelf

Extreme Interdependence (Warner Bros.), by Marco Minnemann with Rick Gratton, is a method book that explores Marco's techniques for moving beyond the conventional goal of four-limb independence to what he terms "interdependence." This concept allows drummers to coordinate their limbs in infinite combinations and switch any rhythmic pattern to any appendage for ultimate freedom and flexibility. The book includes warm-ups, basic patterns, melodies, flam patterns, and hi-hat patterns, and the accompanying CD allows drummers to hear Minnemann's techniques and grooves. List price is $24.95 (with CD).

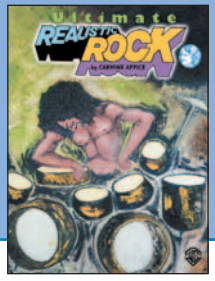
(800) 327-7643,
www.warnerbrospublications.com.

Jungle/Drum 'N' Bass For The Acoustic Drum Set, by Johnny Rabb, provides exercises, transcriptions, sound applications, and techniques for playing this specific genre of music on an acoustic drumset (Warner Bros.) The two included CDs contain examples and demonstrations from each chapter in the 150-page book. List price is $24.95 (with CD).



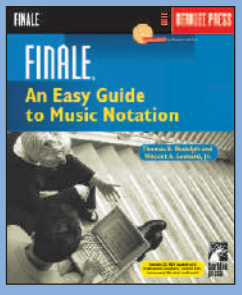
(800) 327-7643,
www.warnerbrospublications.com.

Carmine Appice's classic *Realistic Rock* has been revised and retitled *Ultimate Realistic Rock* (Warner Bros.). It includes over twenty new pages of material, as well as a second CD containing three new play-along tracks and audio examples. List price is $24.95 (with CDs).



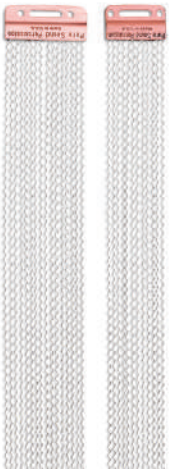
(800) 327-7643,
www.warnerbrospublications.com.

Finale: An Easy Guide To Music Notation (Berklee Press) provides a comprehensive, step-by-step exploration of the popular notation software's capabilities and applications. The book comes complete with a CD-ROM containing tutorials for each of the hundreds of hands-on exercises in the text. List price is $49.95.



(617) 747-2666,
www.berkleepress.com.

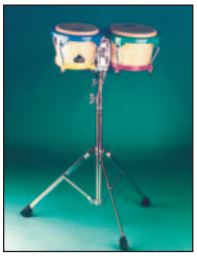
And What's More



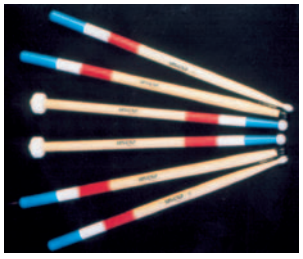
PURESOUND's marching snares feature eighteen-strand premium-grade steel-alloy wires and copper mounting hardware. They're designed to fit most Dynasty, Ludwig, Pearl, Premier, and Yamaha marching snare drums. Puresound also offers two new models specifically developed for concert and orchestral snare drums, featuring polished copper end-clips and stainless-steel alloy wires. The 12-strand and 16-strand models feature an extended coil pattern for a dry, dark tone designed for increased articulation. List price is $39.95. (310) 966-1176, www.puresoundpercussion.com.

DRUMFRAME's EZ model drumkit suspension device is designed to accommodate players who want the benefits of the original DrumFrame's reclined playing position but don't care for a rack-type setup. The EZ model mounts bass drums on a wing support connected to an adjustable-position reclining seat, allowing the player to use an existing stand or rack system. (888) 410-8884, www.drumframe.com.

The TurboTune Professional Drum Key from **DEAN MARKLEY** can be used by hand, or with a supplied handle, cordless drill, or power screwdriver. The key is designed to cut tuning and head-changing time in half.
(650) 589-2191, www.deanmarkley.com.



NINO PERCUSSION's new Bongo Stand is designed for kids to position bongos in relation to their body size. Bongos can be adjusted from 31" to 45" in height, and can be tilted up to 90°. List price is $89. (877) 88-MEINL, goMeinl@aol.com.



UNIGRIP now offers 5A, 5B, 2B, and marching corps models in special red, white & blue dip patterns ($14.95 per pair). Part of the proceeds of the sale from these models will be donated to the American Red Cross. Additionally, Unigrip's Dipstick models are available with handles dipped in red, blue, white, yellow, or a mix of any two colors at $11.95 per pair. (800) 474-7068, www.unigrip2000.com.

KACES Drum Gig Bag Prepacks come in heavy padded nylon and vinyl Standard (10x12, 11x13, 16x16, 18x22, $6\frac{1}{2}$x14) and Fusion (10x10, 10x12, 12x14, 18x22, $6\frac{1}{2}$x14) sets. All bags feature weather-resistant outer shells, tear-resistant lining, luggage-grade zippers, double-stitched edges, rubber handles, and an extra-long strap. List prices: padded nylon Standard—$312.75, padded nylon Fusion—$292.75, vinyl Standard—$183.75, vinyl Fusion—$177.75. (415) 492-9600, www.aceproducts.com.

YAMAHA now offers soft cases designed for electronic and acoustic drumkits, snare drums, cymbals, and sticks. Also included is a HipGig bag set with integrated wheels, a five-wheel hardware bag, a dual-zipper snare bag (with a replacement head pocket), and a dolly-style cymbal bag with colored dividers. All cases feature reinforced handles, Cordura black nylon on the outside, and interior foam padding. (714) 522-9011, www.yamahadrums.com.

PEAVEY's International Series II kit is an upgraded entry-level outfit that includes a new lug design, an eight-lug snare drum, $\frac{7}{8}$" tom arms, and double-braced hardware. Kits are available with 10x12, 11x13, and 16x16 toms, a 14x22 bass drum, and a $6\frac{1}{2}$x14 snare. A bass pedal, throne, and hi-hat and cymbal stands are included, as are an 18" crash/ride and 14" hi-hat cymbals. Finishes include Metallic Silver, Deep Ocean Blue, Metallic Dark Green, Metallic Wine Red, Metallic Claret, and Black. List price is $699.99. (601) 483-5365, www.peavey.com.

THE JAZZ STORE offers T-shirts and posters that let you display your love for drumming. The Hot Drums poster is 24x30 and sells for $25.00 unframed or $129.95 in a black metal frame with plexiglass covering and hanger back. The 100% cotton Hot Drums T-shirt lists for $19.95. (800) 558-9513, www.thejazzstore.com.

SOUND FOR SOUND.

Chad Smith

Years playing – 32

Band – Red Hot Chili Peppers

Concerts – Lost count after 5,216

Last tour – 24 countries

200,000 Air Miles

Favorite venue – Red Square, Moscow, Russia

Largest attendance – 350,000 Woodstock '94

Musical influence – My brother, Bradley Curtis Smith

1 Sonically Matched cymbal set

SABIAN

WWW.SABIAN.COM

SONICALLY MATCHED™

Only from SABIAN

THEY'RE PERFECTLY MATCHED.

Milton Worthington

Years playing – Almost a whole year

Band – Sooky & the Insomniacs

Concerts – Brother's high school dance

Last tour – Hometown

48 kilometers on the family van

Favorite venue – Churchill Boy's Academy

Largest attendance – Almost 90

Musical influence – Chad Smith

1 Sonically Matched cymbal set

Sonically matching cymbals is what we do for Chad Smith, so why not Milton Worthington?

Straight out of the SABIAN Vault, 'Sonically Matched™' cymbal sets represent the subtle distinction between merely putting a set of cymbals together and matching them perfectly. Something *all* drummers want. SABIAN cymbals already sound great. Each cymbal is tested for sound, volume and overall performance. Our Master Product Specialists have been doing it for the greats for years. Now it's your turn. Whether you're on a worldwide tour or playing at the school dance, it's all the same to us. Use the best. Use Sonically Matched. *Only from SABIAN.*

Meinl Byzance Cymbals

East Meets West To Create A New Sound

HITS

22" Projection ride has a good balance of overtones, undertones, and definition

13" medium hi-hats had a darker sound that would be excellent for jazz or low-volume settings

crashes generally sound fairly dark, with rich overtones

MISSES

Flat ride would be too dry for some tastes

8" splash sounds like a toy

Photos and Text by Rick Mattingly

One of the biggest surprises at Summer NAMM 2001 was Meinl's debut of a line of cast cymbals called Byzance. Up to that point, Meinl made all their cymbals by starting with disks stamped from sheets of metal. Cast cymbals are created by heating and rolling individual castings of cymbal alloy. That alloy generally has a ratio of 80% copper to 20% tin, whereas non-cast cymbals are usually 92% copper and 8% tin.

Meinl's casting is done at a foundry in Turkey, where the cymbals are also hand hammered and lathed. The cymbals are then sent to the Meinl facility in Germany for finishing.

Most cast cymbals fall into one of two major categories. There is the hand-hammered type, represented by Zildjian Ks and K Constantinoples, Sabian HH models, and cymbals made by Istanbul Mehmet, Istanbul Agop, Bosphorus, Turkish, and Wuhan. Then there is the machine-hammered type, which includes A Zildjians and Sabian AA models. Byzance cymbals fall somewhere in between. Some have more "old K" characteristics than others. None are quite as bright-sounding as typical A Zildjian or Sabian AA models. So while they have characteristics that recall other cast cymbals, they ultimately have their own sound.

Rides

Byzance ride cymbals are available in six 20" models: light, medium, heavy, Ping, Dry, and Flat. There is also a 22" Projection Ride.

I'd classify the Byzance medium as actually being medium-light in weight, and the heavy as actually being medium. Both have a good balance between stick definition and overtones, and both fall within a medium pitch range, with the heavy ride being a bit higher in pitch. I'd choose the medium ride for jazz and the heavy ride for rock, but both could work in either setting. On the other hand, the light model has a lower pitch and more of the "old K" sound.

Ride Cymbals

The Ping cymbal reminds me of cymbals that are usually designated as "heavy." It has the highest pitch and is the most metallic-sounding of the bunch, but it still has enough overtones to prevent it from being as anvil-like as some heavy rides. The Dry ride had more overtones than I expected, but those overtones fell into a narrow sound spectrum. This made the cymbal slightly more articulate when playing fast patterns.

I'm a big fan of Flat rides generally, but the Byzance Flat ride not only *looked* flat, it *sounded* flat. I

Crashes

Chinas

Hi-Hats

Splashes

mean it was *really* dry, to the point where some would not think it very musical. On the other hand, the 22" Projection ride was a nice surprise. Many 22" rides I've played have been overpowering, with an excessive undertone. But this one had a good balance of overtones, undertones, and definition. It also had a fairly low pitch and dark quality, so while it might be a bit strong for an acoustic trio, it would sound great with anything from a jazz quartet to a big band.

Hi-Hats

As with the heavy ride, I was expecting the 14" heavy hi-hats to sound pretty metallic. But they produced overtones that gave them substantial body and character, while still allowing for a crisp "chick" sound when I stepped on the pedal. The 14" medium hi-hats had a similar quality of sound, but at a lower pitch. The 13" medium hi-hats had a darker sound and were not as penetrating. But they would be excellent for jazz or low-volume settings.

Crashes

Although the ten crash cymbals in the Byzance line cover a wide range of pitches, I was surprised by the consistency throughout the assortment. There's generally quite a difference in timbre between different sizes and weights of crashes. But these cymbals all sounded like members of the same family. With most models falling into thin and medium-thin weights, Byzance crashes generally sound fairly dark, with rich overtones that provide more spread and color than projection and power.

The 14" and 15" thin crashes sounded surprisingly full, and they had a fast decay. These would be good in low-volume situations where you might want the typical pitch characteristic of a slightly larger cymbal but with less volume and power.

There are three 16" crashes to choose from: thin, medium-thin, and medium. The thin model has quite a low pitch for a 16" cymbal. Either of the others could serve as an all-around crash in most setups, producing a fast attack and moderate sustain.

The 17" size comes in thin and medium-thin models, and both had a good balance between power and pitch. Finally, the 18" size comes in thin, medium-thin, and medium models. Like the 16" models, the thin was really dark, while the other two could make good general-purpose crashes.

All of the different models sounded very similar in timbre. But when it came to putting together combinations, I had the best results when I matched weights. For example, the five thin crashes had nice pitch relationships between adjacent sizes. But if I substituted a medium-thin or medium in one of the sizes, the pitch was usually pretty close to one of the others. The fewer sizes one is using, the more options there are for getting good pitch relationships. For instance, in a setup with only two crashes, if one were to start with, say, the 18" medium-thin, any of the 16" or smaller models could work as the second cymbal.

Splashes

To me, the 12" splash sounded more like a small crash. It had a lot more body and overtones than a typical splash cymbal would. And although it wasn't particularly loud, it had some cutting power because of its pitch.

The 10" splash sounded pretty much like I expect a splash to sound, but the 8" model sounded too much like a toy. Its ultra-high pitch and "tin-canny" sound might be useful for special effects, but for the most mainstream splash sound, go for the 10" model.

Chinas

Most China cymbals I've played can be classified either as "trashy" or "gongy." Whether used as crashes or as rides, the Byzance Chinas are definitely in the gongy category. The sound of the 16" model is particularly metallic. The 18" and 20" models have more overtones, but they're still very dry, and their pitches are really low.

Two Worlds In One

By combining old-world and modern cymbalmaking techniques, Meinl has created a line of cymbals that offers unique acoustic performance characteristics. It's a new and viable set of choices, and when it comes to finding one's "perfect" cymbal sound, choices are always good.

THE NUMBERS

8" Splash	$147
10" Splash	$167
12" Splash	$186
13" Hi-Hats (medium) (pair)	$398
14" Hi-Hats (medium, heavy) (pair)	$452
14" Crash (thin)	$226
15" Crash (thin)	$264
16" Crash (thin, medium-thin, medium)	$299
17" Crash (thin, medium-thin)	$329
18" Crash (thin, medium-thin, medium)	$356
16" China	$299
18" China	$356
20" China	$415
20" Ride (Light, medium, heavy, Ping, Dry, Flat)	$415
22" Projection Ride	$509

(305) 418-4520, goMeinl@aol.com.

Custom showcase

Spaun 100% Birch Drums

Great Sound, Great Look

by Martin Patmos

The Spaun Drum Company recently introduced a line of 100% birch drums to complement their 100% maple line. Featuring the same well-thought-out design as their maple cousins, these handcrafted birch drums look beautiful, sound fantastic, and are a joy to play.

It's All About The Shell...

Before the drums were even out of the boxes, I noticed how little they weighed. Once I had them unpacked, I could see that their light weight stemmed from their shell construction and the elimination of unnecessary hardware. Spaun's 8-ply shells are just under ¼" thick (5.5 mm) and have no reinforcement rings. The result is a shell that's thin and light yet strong and resonant.

A notable feature on Spaun drumshells is the double 45° bearing edge. This design ensures that the flat of a drumhead makes contact with the shell—avoiding the edge and resulting in good drumhead contact all around.

HITS

consistent timbre across the kit

great sound all around

simple, clean look

MISSES

no protective pad on bass drum hoop

Spaun deliberately keeps their drum hardware to a minimum. Small, attractive lugs and unobtrusive badges, combined with RIMS mounts, keep the shell free of anything that might impede the sound characteristics of the drums. The resulting look is very clean, and it really shows off the finish. Whether finished in the natural wood grain of the Blonde Satin stain on the test kit we received, or the American Flag motif of the kit featured on the Spaun Web site, these kits will turn heads.

...And It's All About The Sound

The Spaun kit came outfitted with Evans heads. The drums sounded great right from the start, with a distinct attack and great tone.

What first caught my attention was the depth of the toms. They had more bottom than I expected, creating a full tom sound with fantastic projection. The decay was just right, letting me hear the note, yet avoiding unwanted boominess. The toms responded very nicely at different dynamics as well, playing evenly from Bonham loud down to some quiet smacks with brushes.

When I tightened the heads up a bit I discovered that the acoustic characteristics of the toms remained consistent through an impressive tuning range. From a comfortable, fat low, I was able to achieve a crisp, high tom sound without having anything sound choked.

The bass drum matched the sound of the toms very nicely, allowing it to function as the lowest note in the kit as well as providing a great counterpart to the snare drum. With Evans EQ3 heads and an Evans EQ pad providing a little muffling, the sound was solid, deep, and resonant. From lightly feathering the drum, to dropping bombs, to laying down a groove, the bass drum always produced a nice, satisfying "whump."

The only thing I wished for on the bass drum was a small pad of some sort on the wood hoop for mounting my pedal. I'm not a fan of clamps biting directly into the wood, which after a while results in a pretty shoddy-looking hoop. That's something to avoid with nice drums like these.

Snap, Crackle, Pop

The 5" snare we reviewed was crisp and sensitive—and I loved it. The shell is made like those of the other drums, so there was a nice, deep tone with the snares off and a great foundation for them when they were on. Spaun snare drums are outfitted with the Nickel Drumworks Piston Drive snare strainer, which allows an effortless, quiet throw of the snares, both on and off.

The drum had a clean, crisp attack, with a solid, warm tone, plenty of projection, and no stray ringing. And it had great sensitivity to ghost notes and chatter. As with the toms, there was also a nice range of tuning possibilities.

I was also sent a $6^1/_2$" snare to try. Its performance matched that of its 5" sibling, other than the expected lower pitch and deeper tone produced by the deeper shell. These are beautiful snare drums.

Lend 'Em An Ear

There's a lot to like about Spaun's birch drums. With their clean look and great sound, they could easily fit into a wide variety of playing situations. In particular, I suspect they would record very nicely. But what I appreciated more than anything was the consistent timbre across the kit. Taking the drumset as a whole, no drum sounded out of place or demanded any special tweaking to get it "into the chorus." Instead, everything worked together as one complete instrument. Perhaps this is due to the uniformity of the shells used throughout the kit, or maybe it has something to do with the attention to detail that comes from hand-crafting. Selecting hardware to get the most out of the drums doesn't hurt either. Whatever the case, based on my time with the birch kit, it's obvious to me that Spaun really cares about how their drums sound.

Although the prices may put a full kit out of reach for some, these drums have a lot to offer. A variety of sizes and depths are available, and a good selection of finishes, including custom jobs, make getting that "dream kit" all the more likely. So if you're looking for a kit that looks and sounds beautiful, you may want to lend Spaun an ear.

THE NUMBERS

Configuration

Spaun drums are sold individually and priced by size. The list below reflects the drums included in our review kit.

5x14 snare	$ 525
$6^1/_2$x14 snare	$ 595
8x10 tom	$ 495
9x12 tom	$ 525
11x14 tom	$ 595
18x22 bass	$1,150

All shells are 8-ply (5.5-mm) birch, and feature stained or painted finishes. Toms fitted with Evans Genera G2 batters and G1 resonant heads. Snare fitted with Genera G1 coated batter and 300 Hazy snare-side head. Bass drum fitted with EQ3 batter, EQ3 resonant logo head, and EQ pad inside the drum.

(909) 971-7761,
www.spaundrums.com.

Istanbul Agop Mel Lewis 1982 Cymbals And Alchemy Custom Hi-Hats

Distinct Voices For Jazz And Rock

HITS

Mel Lewis ride is extremely versatile

Mel Lewis crash-ride is vibrant

Alchemy hi-hats have exceptional clarity and beautiful appearance

MISSES

Mel Lewis ride lacks distinct bell sound

13" Alchemy hats are too small to be effective rock models

by Will Romano

Istanbul Agop is continuing to expand on all frontiers. They've augmented their jazz catalog by introducing a signature line based on Mel Lewis's personal "road models"—cymbals that Mel played while touring with his big band in the early 1980s. Hence they are referred to by the company as the "Mel Lewis 1982 models." The line features a ride, a crash/ride, and hi-hats.

At the same time, Istanbul Agop has introduced new Alchemy Custom 13" and 14" hi-hats. Targeted toward rock, pop, Latin, and hip-hop players, the Alchemy Customs continue the company's expansion into non-jazz areas.

The Mel Lewis Legacy

Mel Lewis's cymbal sound was a unique balance of darkness and warmth, and of trashy and soft tones. Istanbul Agop took on the unenviable task of having to reproduce those contrasting subtleties.

I played the Mel Lewis 20" 1982 ride in a few different settings, including blues, light rock, and folky-jazz. The cymbal held its own under all circumstances. It was pingy, with clear stick definition. But it also produced multi-layered overtones that ranged from very light to very dark.

When I laid into the ride to play a traditional swing beat, my attack chattered away clearly. However, to my surprise the cymbal also had incredible spread, almost like a current of wind swirling under my wood-tipped sticks. (It would probably generate even more color with nylon-tipped sticks.) I was able to keep time *and* add surging hisses to communicate with the band in dynamic ways.

Next I used brushes to generate a sonic mist. And when I took mallets to the cymbal, a pleasing cloud of dark noise hovered over the music like a warm blanket.

Jim Esposito

The ride also recorded well. Though a simple ADAT and two-mic' setup was all we used, the ride simply shimmered. On playback, my patterns were clear and well defined. The only drawback was the virtually nonexistent bell sound. Nonetheless, this is a great cymbal that would work not only for straight-ahead jazz, but also for big band and soft jazz.

Balancing Act

I don't know of too many cymbals that fulfill the promise of being both crash and ride. I always believed that in order to keep a proper balance, a crash/ride had to mute its ride elements and beef up its crash characteristics. That could be a recipe for disaster.

The 18" Mel Lewis 1982 crash/ride is a different case. As a crash it's larger—and louder—than I'm used to. Along with a light gonginess, the cymbal chimed with a piercing, high-pitched ring.

Used as a ride, the 18" crash/ride generated vibrant tones on the high and low ends of the spectrum. (As on the 20" ride, moving closer to the bell added nothing to the sound.) Just to further test the cymbal's versatility, I played it with mallets, achieving a "waves crashing in the distance" feel that rolled in and out very quickly.

As a rock cymbal, this model wouldn't cut it. But we're talkin' jazz here. It's certainly strong enough to be a ride in the traditional sense for a big band setting. Additionally, the pleasing color of its overtones make it perfect for being creative on a hard bop gig.

Got A Light?

The Mel Lewis 1982 13" hi-hats were bright and capable of holding their own within a musical context. While I generally don't like the light wash that smaller hats produce, these cymbals produced a quick, penetrating sizzle. Their "chick" sound was clean and loud, clearly stating the time for the entire band. Even under the "woosh" of the Lewis ride, it cut through.

At one point I played the hi-hat alone in a practice session. A taut, quick response and a crisp "tsst" sound emanated when the hats were open and shut. I played single strokes and built up to doubles. I loosened up the hats, letting out some steam. In so doing, I discovered a monster tone that was containable but still capable of generating lots of power. That sound convinced me that these hats would be great not only for jazz, but also for funk and hip-hop.

The Alchemist's Art

To start with, Istanbul Agop's Alchemy Custom 13" and 14" hi-hats rank among the most *beautiful* cymbals I've ever seen. They literally gleam with a golden hue that hints at the treasures to be found when they're played. The top cymbal is finished in a brilliant circular pattern. The bottom cymbal, an extra-heavy unlathed model, carries a subtle terrain of small hand-hammered marks that vaguely resemble medieval chain-mail armor.

I'm a fan of larger hi-hats, so I took to the 14" hats right away. The heavy bottom cymbal's extra weight meant that I didn't have to stomp the floor to get a cutting "chick" sound. The cymbals did all the work for me.

According to Istanbul Agop, part of the reason that the Alchemy line sounds the way it does is because the cymbals are made with an alloy that's mixed with other, heavier metals. Then double-lathing and hand-hammering techniques add extra brightness. Whatever the reason, when I played 16ths or 32nd notes, I could hear every beat. And when I played the hats slightly opened, they produced a throaty, even wash without annoying rings. Just as the company had intended, these hats worked well in a rock setting.

The 13" hats were a slightly different story. I was immediately struck by how light these "skinny" cymbals were as compared to the 14" models. They simply had less surface area, and could not balance their natural brightness with their mass. So they lacked the body that would make them ideal as rock cymbals. On the other hand, they generated a very pleasing, quick-and-trashy sound. They also had a defined chick that avoided an annoying metal-gulping-metal noise. Perfect, I thought, for pop and hip-hop.

Talkin' Turkey

While they have slight drawbacks, on the whole these new Istanbul Agop models have great range. The Mel Lewis models offer distinct character with surprising versatility. The Alchemy Custom hi-hats are viable new contenders in the pop and rock genres. They're not cheap, but they are priced reasonably for hand-hammered pro models. My advice is to open your ears and really listen. These new cymbals may change your perspective. They're distributed by DR Music.

THE NUMBERS

Mel Lewis 13" hi-hats	$380
Mel Lewis 18" crash/ride	$305
Mel Lewis 20" ride	$405
Alchemy Custom 13" hats	$402
Alchemy Custom 14" hats	$450

(201) 599-0100, www.istanbulcymbals.com.

Pearl CST-80 Cymbal Stacker And BC-800W Boom/Cymbal Stand

Space-Saving Can Be Hip

HITS

solid design and construction

endless combinations of stacking

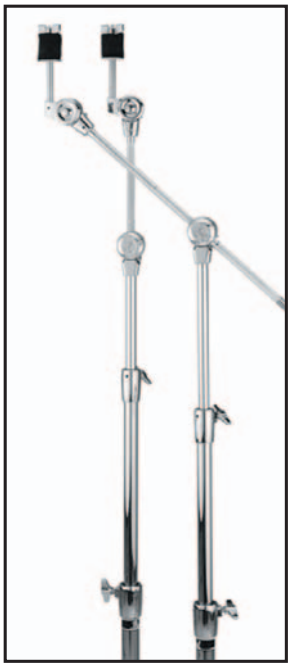
by Chap Ostrander

I love gadgets like Pearl's new Cymbal Stacker. Not only does it look cool, but I'm intrigued with the potential of placing multiple cymbals on one stand. I usually work in situations where space is at a premium, so I prefer to have multiple arms off one stand wherever possible.

You need a Pearl cymbal stand in order to use the Cymbal Stacker. Models it's compatible with include the C-800W, C-70W, B-800W, BC-800W, and B-70W stands, along with the CH-70 cymbal holder. Pearl sent us the BC-800W. Let's check it out.

Take A Stand

The BC-800W convertible boom/cymbal stand is a four-section stand with a "disappearing" boom arm on top. As a straight stand, its four segments allow it to extend to a height of over six feet. (Does Shaq play drums?) The lower three sections pass through Pearl's PowerPro collars, which provide a solid grip over a several-inch length. The legs are double-braced and end in rubber feet. Even so, the stand doesn't weigh a ton.



The solid arm on top passes through a gear tilter. It's controlled by a single wing nut that allows you to hold the desired adjustment while you tighten it down. The rod is knurled so that the gear tilter gets a good grip. In my testing there was no slipping or extraneous movement. This is one stable stand.

Branching Out

Now the fun starts. The CST-80 Cymbal Stacker arrives in three sections. The bottom section is made up of a half tilter and an 8"-long steel rod. The lower portion of the rod is smooth, while the top 2¾" is knurled. Included on the lower rod are upper and lower position clamps and two cymbal felts. The clamps are steel disks with drumkey screws to adjust the distance between them.

The middle section of the Stacker is a 5½" rod with a tilter mounted on Pearl's Dual Action Connector.

The top is another Dual Action Connector topped off with a half of a tilter.

Your first step is to take apart the tilter on the top of the stand. Save the half with the felts and wing nut; you'll need them later.

The bottom section of the Stacker attaches to the top of the cymbal stand. Now you have the 8" rod with the positioning clamps in place, and you can place different cymbals between the felts. You can even use a set of hi-hats, due to the smooth length of the rod. (You can set the pressure between the cymbals by pressing down on the top clamp while tightening.)

Having employed the bottom section, you're now ready to branch up and out, using the middle section. This is where the Dual Action Connector comes in. Holes in the bottom of the tilter allow the rod from the bottom section to be inserted straight into the middle section, or offset, or at a 90° angle to the plane of the tilter. If you choose the straight connection, you get another 9" of altitude gain over the bottom. The cool part comes if you decide to offset the unit. You can rotate the middle rod over the cymbal on the bottom, plus tilt and angle it to suit your imagination.

The final step is to go to the top section, which is another Dual Action Connector with a half tilter. Remember the half you saved from the original cymbal stand? You use it, along with the half on the Stacker, to assemble a whole tilter. Now you have a second tilting cymbal holder that can be mounted in two different directions.

At this point, the choices abound. I'd probably put the larger of the cymbals I planned to use on the bottom, but since the top one will be offset, you can do pretty much whatever you want. It's particularly nice to have the option to place a set of hi-hats on the bottom section. My first choice was a set of 14" hi hats with an 8" splash above. Thanks to the Dual Action Connector, I was able to offset the middle section and move the splash off to the side.

The same dizzying array of choices awaits you when you attach the upper tilter on the end of the middle rod. You can choose to offset the top cymbal holder and move it along the middle rod. For example, the second configuration I tried was to place my ride cymbal on the bottom and fly a crash above it. It felt very cool to rotate the crash above the ride until I found the perfect spot for it.

My last experiment was to "fly in" the hi-hat/crash combination above and to the left of my ride using the BC-800W boom. The stand was, as I said before, very stable. Common sense will tell you if you're branching out too far.

The CST-80 can't employ memory locks, because you need to disassemble it to get the cymbals off and pack up the stand. If you desire to combine it with another Stacker, you would then treat the tilter on top of the first unit as if it were at the top of the stand, and build up from there.

The components of the CST-80 Cymbal Stacker are all well designed and solidly built. I found the whole system very flexible and user-friendly. The potential configurations of stacking are limited only by your imagination...and gravity. Have fun!

THE NUMBERS

CST-80 Cymbal Stacker ..... **$ 50**
BC-800W Convertible Boom/Cymbal Stand **$119**

(615) 833-4477, www.pearldrum.com.

Earthtone Natural Skin Drumheads

Old Tonality Meets New Technology

HITS

full, rich, natural tone

pre-stretched for short break-in period

by Chap Ostrander

I remember waiting for an outdoor band concert to begin when I was a very young boy. Although it was a clear evening, it had rained during the afternoon, so there was some dampness in the air. The group was set up and about to play. I looked up at the stage and saw fire coming from the back row. Although I feared that something must be terribly wrong, I noticed that I was the only one concerned. So I took a closer look. At the back of the band sat a percussionist holding a pair of bongos over a flaming can of Sterno.

I didn't find out until years later that this was how players of the time dealt with skin heads. In fact, it had been a concern of drummers and percussionists for generations. A skin head produces great tone and warmth, but is subject to dramatic—and infuriating—tension changes due to varying atmospheric conditions. This is why plastic heads gained prominence so quickly after they were introduced in the late 1950s. There was also the matter of durability: Plastic heads were durable, skin heads were not.

Until now, that is. Goldtone Instruments produces a range of folk instruments. They also make real skin banjo heads, which can be especially prone to tuning problems. Goldtone found that their skin heads were 90% trouble-free as compared to a regularly mounted skin head.

Jim Esposito

Their experience in this area enabled them to move into the skin drumhead market. Thus, Earthtone Drumheads were born.

The new skin heads come pre-stretched and pre-mounted on an aluminum rim, just like a plastic head, so no old-fashioned "tucking" is required. Each head features a molded-in crown, also like a plastic head, to work with the bearing edges on modern drums. A proprietary process ensures the heads' structural integrity, and their surface is naturally textured for brush use. Because of their organic nature, the heads require a one- to two-day relaxing period, during which some stretching will occur. After that they can be tuned easily in a normal manner.

Although Earthtone heads feature mounting and molding technology far superior to that used with skin heads in the 1940s and '50s, they *are* made of a natural material that's subject to the influence of heat and humidity. Still, I used them over a period of time when the weather changed pretty dramatically, and no head ever became unplayable or untunable. At the most, I'd say that you might need to tune an Earthtone head a bit more frequently than you would a plastic head.

Next Of Skin

I began my testing process with a fairly limited experiment: I replaced the plastic batter head on my 16" floor tom with an Earthtone head. The result was stunning. The drum changed in character from decent-sounding to warm and round. The skin head warmed up the tone and made it exceptionally full. When I also replaced the bottom head, the sound was *so* warm and resonant that it literally changed my concept of how to play the drum. I felt like I was playing *into* the drum rather than bouncing off the top. The body and sustain were incredible. I could hit the drum, go make a pot of tea, and come back to find it still ringing.

The bass drum was next. Again, I first changed only the batter head. The result was a full, ringing sound from that head. I could imagine clamping an old-fashioned muffler onto the hoop and adjusting it against the head. Reinstalling the plastic batter head and changing the resonant head to a skin head left the attack intact. But the drum's sound out front also possessed the fullness that I had heard with a skin head on the batter side. I could hardly *wait* to play the drum with two skins. When I did, it sounded like a concert bass. The bottom line is that the Earthtone heads produced all the sound I could handle. I needed only to decide how much of it to use. I didn't use much muffling, since I was enjoying the experience.

My rack toms gave the same response to the head replacement. When the top head alone was changed, the sound was noticeably warmer and fuller. Changing the bottom head more than doubled the effect. Based on this fact, I don't think that a Mylar head on the resonant side of the drum can realize the full potential of interacting with the skin head. When it comes to toms and bass drums, two heads seem to truly be better than one.

Any reservations I had regarding a natural-skin head working well on my snare drum were quickly eliminated. My "personal sound" comes from a 5"- to 5½"-deep acrylic or metal snare tuned rather high and crisp. I found that the Earth Tone batter head could be tuned up to those heights and still retain the warmth and depth that the nature of the head imparts. (There is no snare-side head available from Earthtone at this time.) When I tried the head on a 6½" snare, the drum sounded warm and fat. When I played with brushes, the sound was smooth and full, with great consistency. (And it *felt* great to play on, too.)

My wife, a classical percussionist, tried the head in a concert setting on an old Gretsch drum with cable snares, and also on a single-ply wood drum with wire snares. They both performed beautifully, with terrific response and tone from the head.

Heads Up

Although Earthtone skin heads come from a historic drumming tradition, I don't believe you need vintage drums in order to have them work their magic. Their warmth and fullness would enhance the sound of any drum, so it's up to you to see where you can use them. They aren't as durable as heavy-duty, twin-ply plastic heads with dots, so they may not be the best choice for blistering speed-metal playing. But they can hold their own against single-ply plastic heads in the durability department. And they offer much more character, both in sound and looks.

THE NUMBERS

10"	$29.99
11"	$32.99
12"	$34.99
13"	$36.99
14"	$38.99
16"	$45.99
18"	$59.99
20"	$65.99
22"	$69.99

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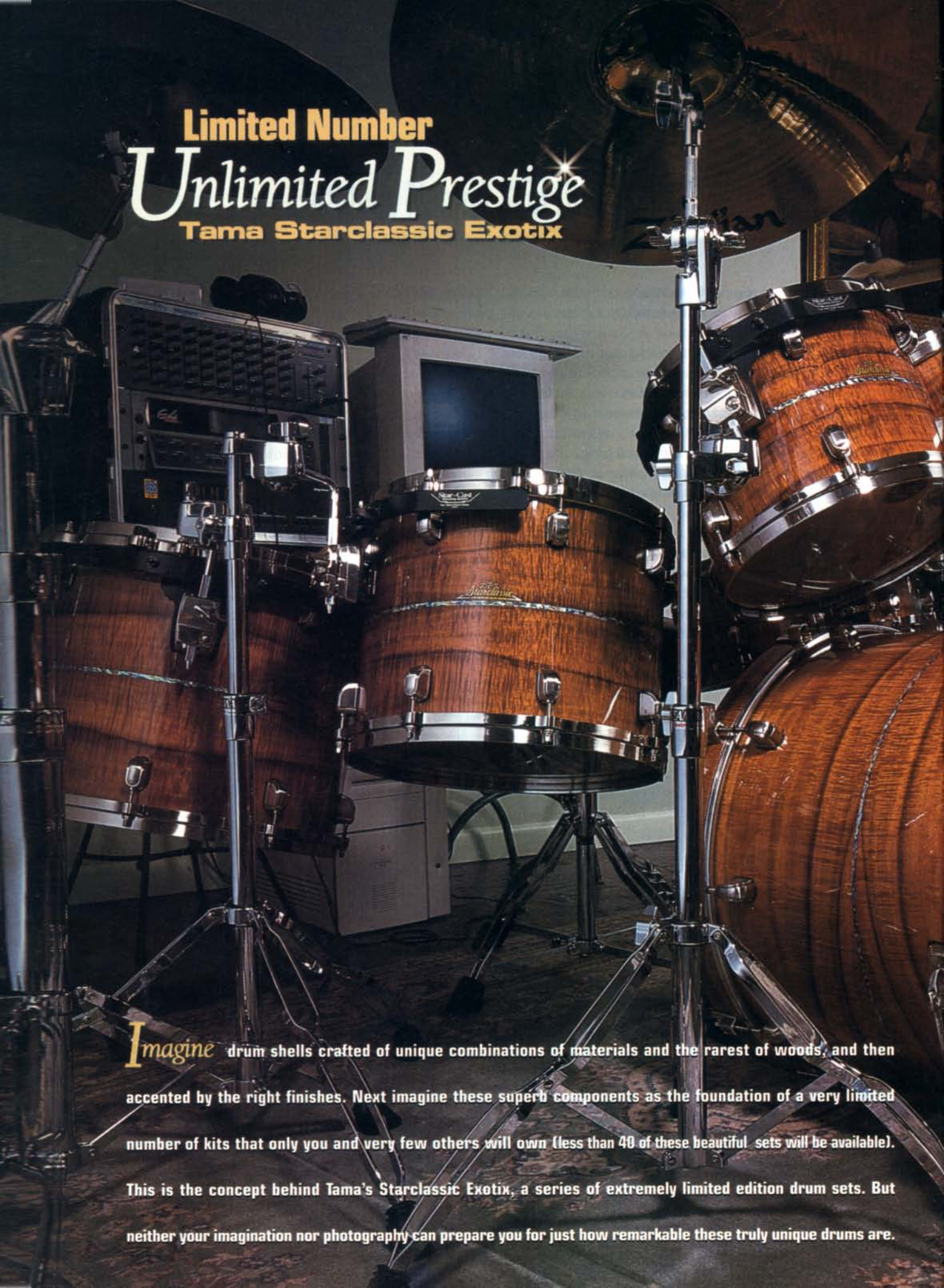

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April 2, 2002 marks the fifteenth anniversary of the passing of Buddy Rich, the greatest drummer

who ever lived. To honor this titan of the drums, we offer this look back at Buddy's life.

Even though Buddy would use many brands of drums throughout his career, he signed with Slingerland early on. This is a promo shot from 1940.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

Buddy's first foray into the world of jazz, at about age twenty, at the Hickory House in New York. That's Louis Prima on trumpet, Sid Weiss on bass, Meyer Weinberg on clarinet, and Allan Reuss playing guitar. Note the absence of a hi-hat.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

Tommy Dorsey (right), one of Buddy's first employers, loved the young drummer's playing. (From 1942.)

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

The cover shot of *Metronome* magazine, from 1945, containing the first write-up of Buddy's new band.

My Lessons From Buddy

by John Riley

Buddy Rich's name came up over dinner one evening with the late, great jazz drummer Arthur Taylor. Arthur told me, "My mother used to take me to see the shows at the Apollo Theater. When I was sixteen she took me to see The Buddy Rich Big Band. We went to a lot of shows, though I was young and didn't know who Buddy Rich was. But the memory of that evening is permanently burned into my brain.

"The curtain went up and the band started playing," Taylor continued. "Buddy was totally in control of the band. Then at the end of the first song, Buddy played an incredible drum solo. It was during that drum solo that I realized he had a broken arm and was playing with only *one stick*. What he did with that one stick that night was more than I've heard anyone play with two! His playing was so powerful that I can remember it like it happened yesterday."

> "Be like Buddy, but don't play like Buddy. Find your own voice."

We've all heard stories about Buddy. None were about "casual" encounters; Buddy always made a vivid impression. I'd like to share a couple of mine.

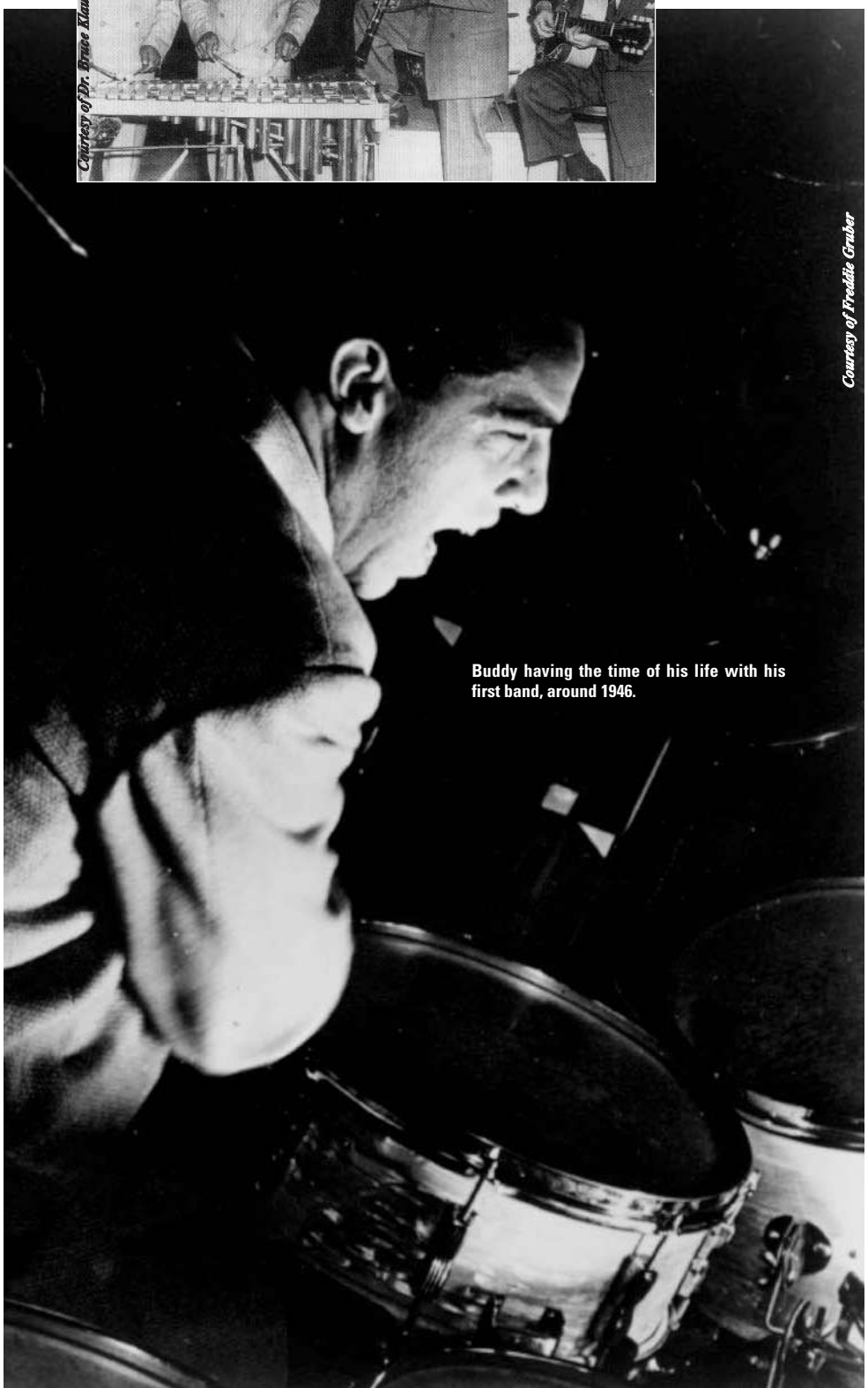
I was fourteen years old and on a family vacation in Florida the first time I saw Buddy Rich play. He was leading his big band in a concert at a large supper club. Earlier I had seen various rock bands on television, and I had seen Gene Krupa do a drum clinic. But Buddy was the first "name" musician I saw play live. And WOW, what a way to start!

I was unable to absorb most of what Buddy played, but I can tell you that his playing was powerful, passionate, and direct—and so was his stage personality. Sonically and visually, he demanded my attention; I was totally mesmerized and knocked out.

After the set, at my father's insistence—"Go talk to him; see what you can learn"—I followed Buddy back to his dressing room, a large new mobile home parked behind the club. Buddy saw me but was involved in discussing how to decorate his mobile home. I didn't leave, and eventually, with the speed and power of his single-stroke roll, Buddy turned to me and said, "What do you want, kid?" I stammered. "You a drum

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

An all-star jam session on 52nd street from around 1945, with Count Basie and Lionel Hampton on vibes, Artie Shaw on clarinet, Tommy Dorsey on trombone, Ziggy Elman on trumpet, Les Paul on guitar, Illinois Jacquet on tenor sax, and Buddy.



Courtesy of Freddie Gruber

Buddy having the time of his life with his first band, around 1946.

mer?" "Yes." "What kind of music do you listen to?" "Everything." Sarcastically, "Great. Jazz?" Sheepishly, "Yes." "Okay kid, what's the greatest two-bar break ever played?" I had no idea. "'Queer Street,' kid, Shadow Wilson, do your homework!" I was dismissed. Ouch! Lesson number one: Music is serious business. Get serious.

Well, I didn't hear "Queer Street" until many years later, but Buddy's direct manner and assuredness did compel me to check out more music more seriously. I bought his recording *Swinging New Big Band*, and again was blown away by his power, dexterity, *and* finesse. I practiced with that recording. Buddy's support of the band, his intimate awareness of *everything* the horns were doing—not to mention his speed, precision, and touch—became a measuring gauge for me. Lesson number two: The drums are fun, but music is serious business. Get *more* serious.

Fast forward to my senior year of high school, when I studied with Joe Morello. Joe is a fantastic musician, teacher, and friend. When Joe spoke about his favorite drummers, the names Gene Krupa, Jo Jones, Max Roach, and Roy Haynes always came up. His admiration for these men was profound. But to me, Joe seemed to regard Buddy in an even more cherished realm, at the head of the table. Lesson number three: Musicians are serious, but *great* musicians admire each other. Playing music is not a competitive sport.

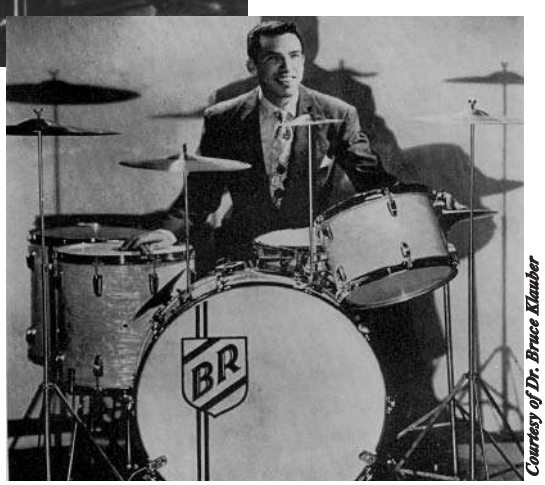
On to my years at North Texas. The hundred fifty drummer/percussionists practiced in an old dormitory building. There were about forty practice rooms, and three or four students were assigned to each room. During the day the rooms weren't that busy; everyone had classes or ensembles. At night the building was roaring with practicers.

Those hundred fifty drummers came from all over the country and were into every kind of drumming known to man. I shared a practice room with three other students, and if I went to practice and my room was taken, I would just go down the hall and see who else was practicing. If I heard something interesting, I'd knock on the door and ask that person to show me what they were practicing, where it came from, and why they were working on it. Access to a hundred fifty serious players, with varied interests, was an incredible resource and stimulus for me.

I've always been curious about all kinds of music, and I like to check everything out. I'll absorb a little bit from over here and something else from over there. Some people find the one thing that they love and stick

One of the few records that Buddy would publicly name as his absolute favorites was the *Charlie Parker With Strings* outing of 1949. This photo is from that session, with Ray Brown on bass.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber



Despite his difficult relationship with Norman Granz, Buddy was a regular on the Jazz At The Philharmonic troupe and on Granz' Verve Records. (From 1953.)

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

with it forever. Jeff Crosby, from Cleveland, Ohio, and Ben Atkinson, from Houston, Texas, were the resident Buddy Rich experts, and they turned me on to the intimate details of his playing. They set up their kits and tuned their drums exactly like Buddy did. They knew every move on *Swinging New Big Band* and introduced me to a dozen other great Buddy recordings. Whenever I felt in need of a high-octane boost, I would visit Ben or Jeff and they would invariably lay a "Buddyism" on me that would kick my butt. Lesson number four: Music is serious, but there's more than one way to skin a cat.

Jump ahead to my days with Woody Herman. Playing with The Woody Herman Band was a fantastic experience for me. It was my first road gig, and the band worked fifty weeks a year. Through that gig I learned a lot about music and life, and I gained a feeling of connection to the older musicians and bands of the '30s, '40s, and '50s.

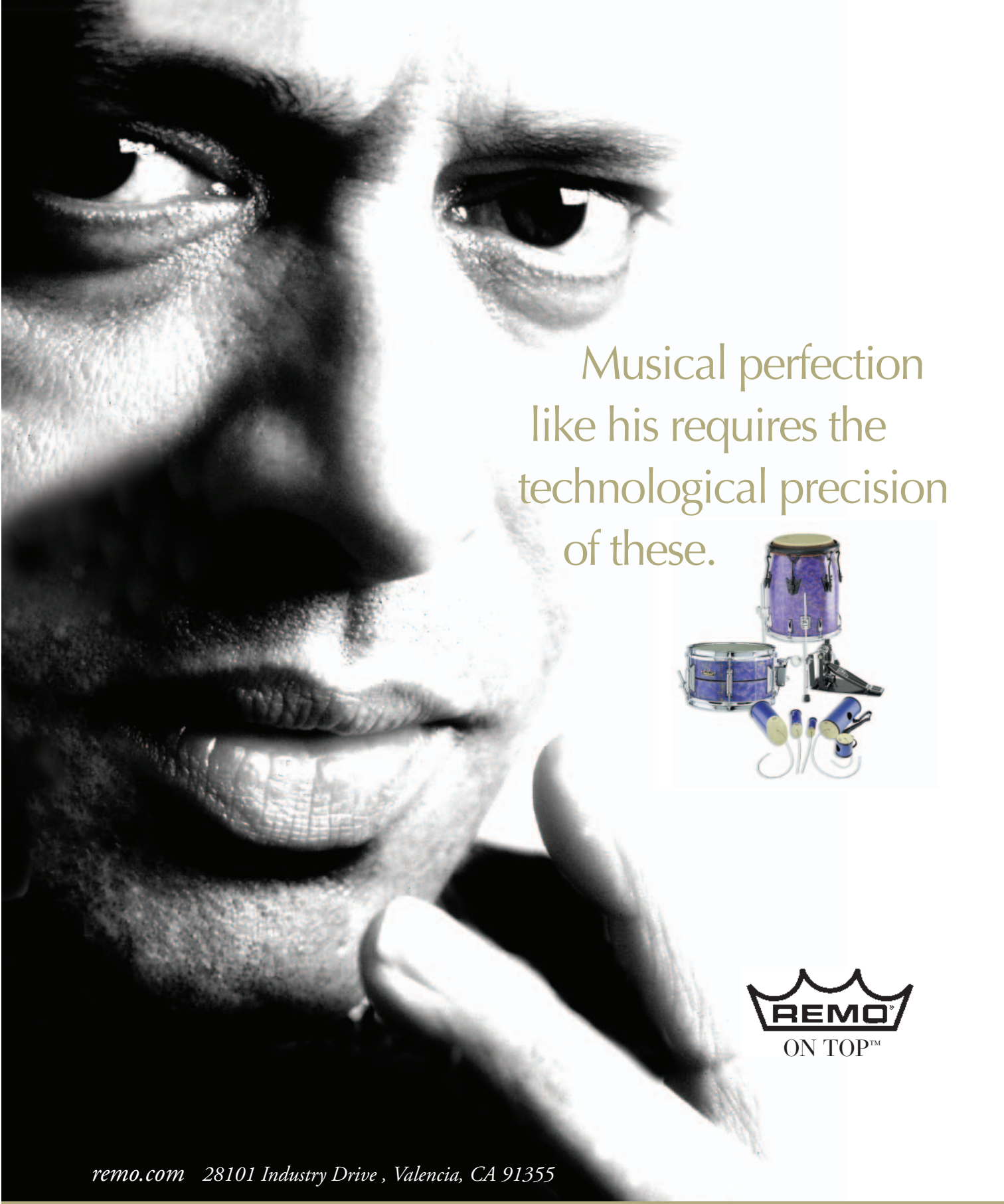
Woody's band *was* one of those bands; like Basie and Ellington, it started in the 1930s.

Woody didn't play very much during the sets, but he was definitely a dynamic personality and the center of attention. However, as a bandleader, he was pretty loose. Not once did he tell me how or what to play. When he needed something musically from me, he would mention it very casually to one of the other guys in the band, and eventually the message would get to me.

Buddy's band operated in a different manner; Buddy wasn't shy about telling his band exactly how to play. While Woody insisted on our best, he treated us as if we were his grandchildren. Buddy ordered his sidemen around as if they were Marines in boot camp and he was their drill sergeant. Buddy gave his all in every performance and demanded nothing less from his sidemen.

Buddy loved to check out other drummers and could often be seen in the wings. If he liked what he heard he would listen all night. If he didn't like the drummer, he would split real fast. Luckily for me, he didn't remember that young drummer hanging around his mobile home in Florida, and he heard something he liked in my playing. Regardless of the time I spent studying his playing and the insights I gained from Jeff and Ben, I played nothing like Buddy. But the few times I happened to be playing on the same festival as he was, he was very encouraging to me.

I recall a gig at Disney World where Woody's band, Buddy's band, and Maynard Ferguson's band, with Peter Erskine on drums, played consecutive sets on three different stages around the park. After the completion of their set, each band would dash to the next stage to check



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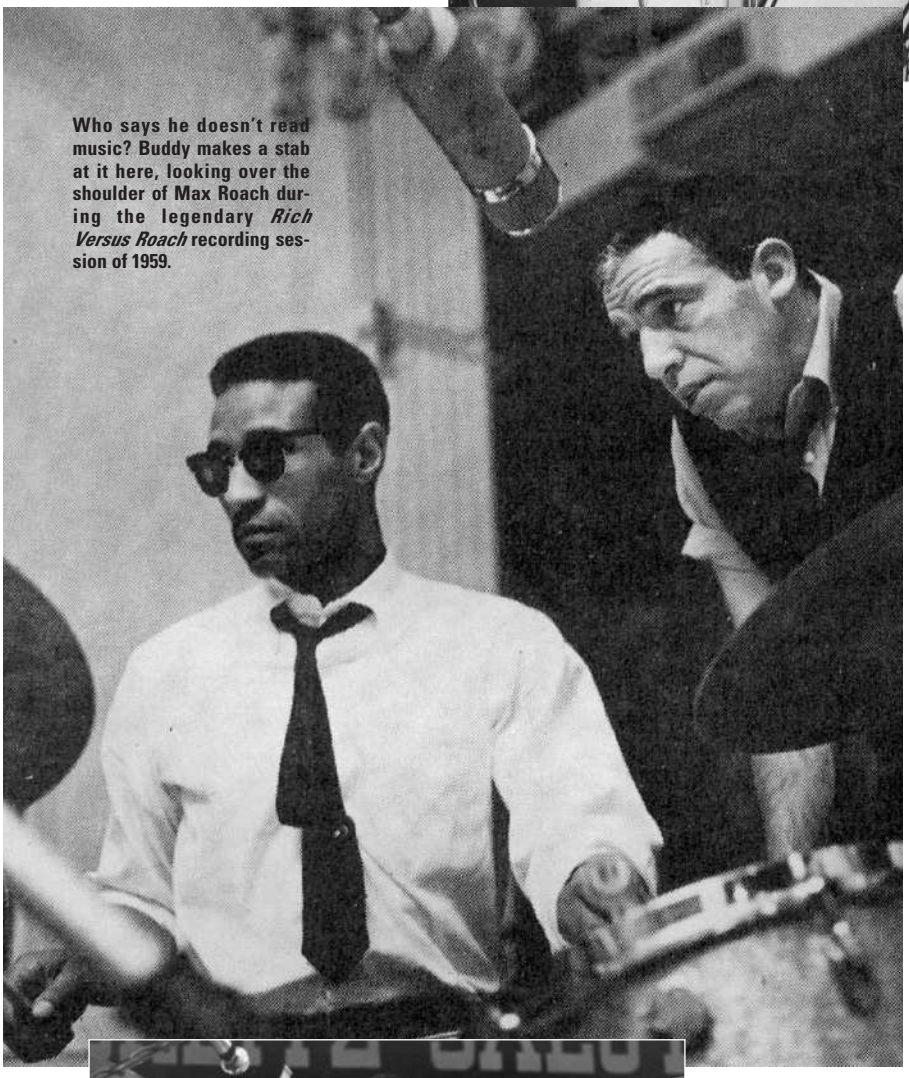
Buddy led a marvelous succession of small groups when, from time to time, he would leave the Harry James band. Here he is in Chicago in 1957.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber



Who says he doesn't read music? Buddy makes a stab at it here, looking over the shoulder of Max Roach during the legendary *Rich Versus Roach* recording session of 1959.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

Here's Buddy in 1967, with his classic setup, including the shell-mounted ride cymbal, splash cymbal, and tom-tom.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

out the other bands. Lesson number five: Be like Buddy—don't *play* like Buddy. Find your own voice. Learn from everyone, but play yourself.

Now I'm in New York City a couple of years after I left Woody's band. I'm walking through Manny's Music Store, going to the drum department, and I meet Buddy as he's leaving. This time he does remember me and asks, "Riley, what you been up to?" I told him that I had left Woody's band and was freelancing in the city. He asked how it was going. I told him that things were progressing slowly and once in a while I was able to play some good music. He said: "You should have never left Woody. He was the best teacher you could ever have." Then he walked away.

I was taken aback by Buddy's directness, and I thought, "That old guy is crazy." Years later I was able to admit to myself that he was right; playing with Woody's band was a very rare opportunity and experience. Maybe I did leave Woody's gig too soon. Lesson number six: The music business is rough. Don't jump ship too soon. Stay with a good gig until a better one comes your way.

Buddy left us too soon. Fortunately he recorded—and was filmed—often and in many different settings. Of his many big band recordings, I'm still knocked out by *Swinging New Big Band*, *Mercy, Mercy*, and *Live In London*. But two of my favorite Buddy Rich recordings contain no extended drum solos. *Charlie Parker With Strings* is a classic recording that most instrumentalists cherish but drummers seem to overlook, and *Ella Fitzgerald And Louis Armstrong* is a recording that singers love, with the fantastically swinging rhythm section of Oscar Peterson, Ray Brown, Herb Ellis, and Buddy Rich. Buddy plays beautifully, mostly with brushes, throughout these recordings.

Listen to the way Buddy plays when he's playing with *his* peers. While he plays with great strength on the two CDs, he seems to take on a different persona; he's not the drill sergeant leading the troops. Rather, he's more like an intimate confidant and best friend to all the other musicians.

Lesson number seven: Lessons one through six are true.

John Riley's career includes work with such artists as John Scofield, Mike Stern, Woody Herman, and Stan Getz. He has also written two critically acclaimed books, The Art Of Bop Drumming *and* Beyond Bop Drumming, *published by Manhattan Music.*

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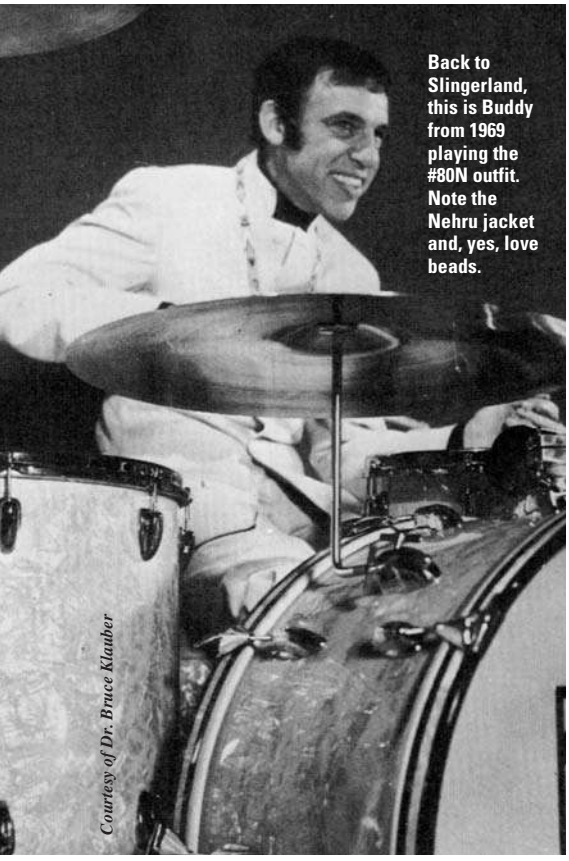
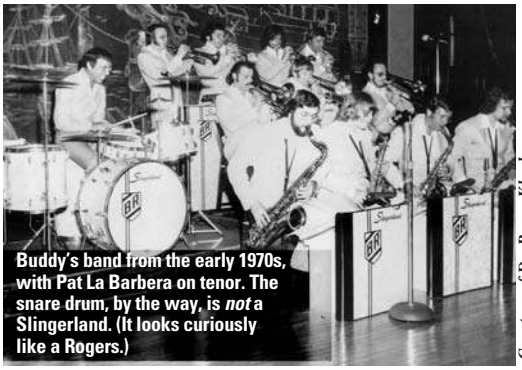


Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

Back to Slingerland, this is Buddy from 1969 playing the #80N outfit. Note the Nehru jacket and, yes, love beads.



Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

Buddy's band from the early 1970s, with Pat La Barbera on tenor. The snare drum, by the way, is *not* a Slingerland. (It looks curiously like a Rogers.)

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

From 1974 in England, Buddy again pulled out the Fibes snare (one of his favorites), which infuriated Slingerland management.

Courtesy of Cathy Rich

Later in the '70s, Buddy switched to Ludwig. (Check out the concert toms!)

More Rich Thoughts

by Dr. Bruce H. Klauber

Editor's note: Dr. Bruce H. Klauber supplied many of the photos in this tribute. Besides being a recognized expert on Buddy, he is the biographer of Gene Krupa, co-producer/writer of the DCI Jazz Legends *videos, series producer of the Hudson Music* Classic Jazz Drummers *videos and DVDs, and a working jazz drummer and recording artist.*

Like thousands of other young drummers who came up in the late 1960s, all I wanted to do was play like Buddy, look like Buddy, and get a date with Cathy Rich. Gorgeous as she was (and is), my reason for wanting to meet her was, of course, to get tight with her father.

Joy Adams

I made it my business to show up whenever Buddy was appearing within a hundred miles of my Philadelphia home, even when I couldn't actually afford to go in. Many nights, in fact, were spent with my ear to the outside wall of whatever club he was playing in. More than once, when the outside temperature was below freezing, my ear almost stuck to the wall.

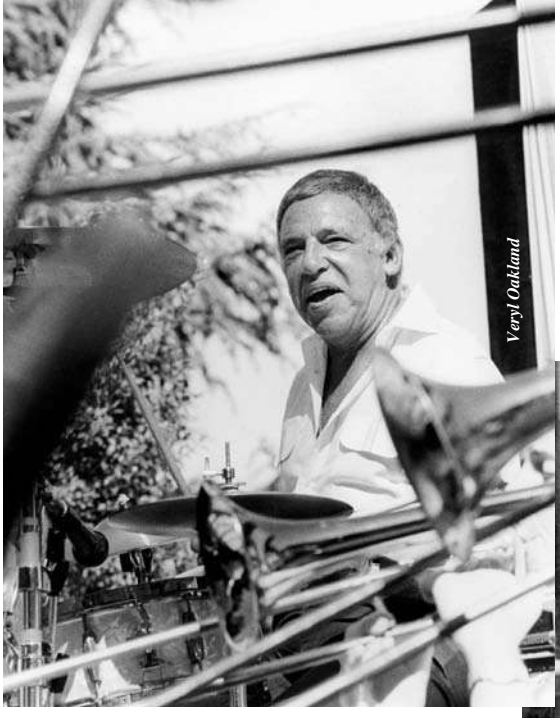
Eventually, by the early 1970s, I lucked out, as Buddy began to spend a lot of time in Philadelphia. The Riches had good friends here, and there was a lot of work for the band at a comfortable club on the riverfront called Brandi's Wharf. A friend of mine was selling ad time for a local jazz radio station that Brandi's advertised on, and was able to get gratis front-row seats for us whenever Buddy was in town. By then I had developed a nodding acquaintance with The Man. He had seen me around virtually everywhere, and I had been drumming on and off with a dear old friend of his, saxophonist Charlie Ventura. Still, my dream of hanging with Buddy wasn't yet realized.

During a long stint as a newspaper editor during this period, I decided to use my power to at least try to get an interview with him. It finally happened, and truth be told, I was nervous. I knew he hated talking about the past, and that he had the reputation of biting the heads off of less-than-knowledgeable interviewers. I certainly didn't want to blow my one big chance of getting to know my idol.

Our time on the telephone was beautiful, and he told me some things I will never, ever forget. Some examples?

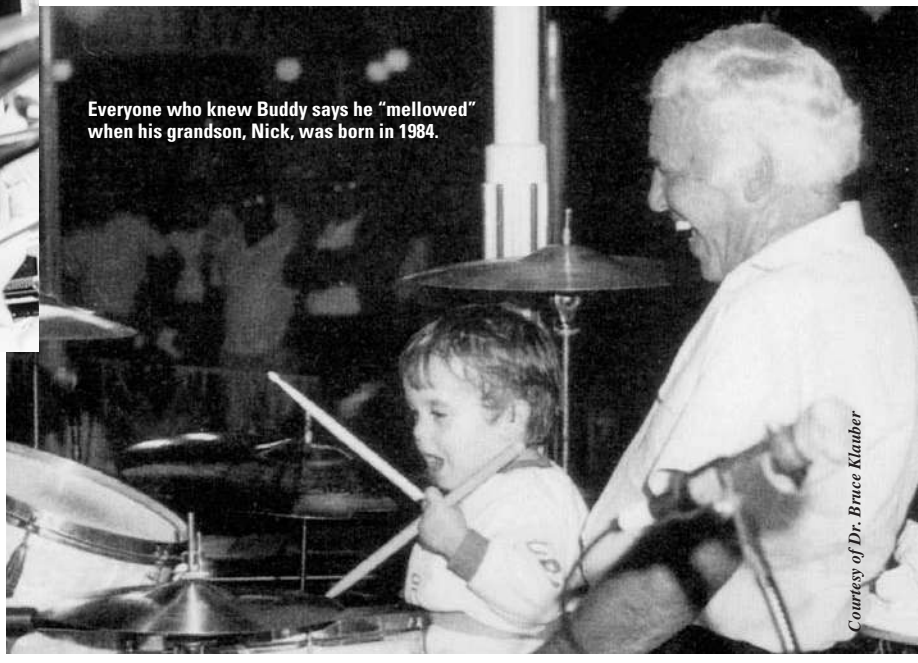
"To be a part of history is bullshit. I'm not interested in what I played yesterday or even today. I'm interested in what I'll play tomorrow.

"Why should I listen to a drummer who's imitating some other drummer? Why would I want to listen to someone who tries to play like me or these guys who want to look like me? Why would I want to listen to Rich Little impersonate Cary Grant when I can listen to Cary Grant? To try to be original and to find your



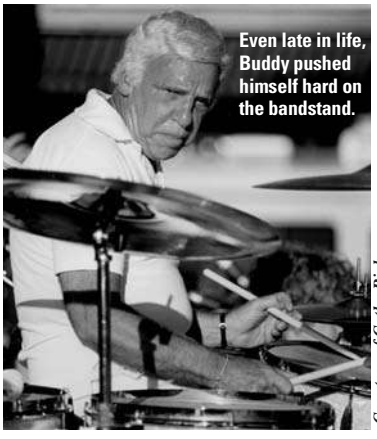
Veryl Oakland

Buddy proudly led his big band for over twenty years. He's shown here in the early 1980s.



Everyone who knew Buddy says he "mellowed" when his grandson, Nick, was born in 1984.

Courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber



Even late in life, Buddy pushed himself hard on the bandstand.

Courtesy of Cathy Rich

Our sincere thanks go to Cathy Rich, Steve Arnold, and Dr. Bruce Klauber for their help in tracking down many of these photos. For more on Buddy, be sure to check out www.buddyrich.com.

own way is to be a man."

That last remark really hit home, especially when he added, "I know you're beginning to find your own style now, aren't you?"

I was floored. Subsequently, I found out that Buddy had long been keeping "informal tabs" on the progress of a virtual network of young drummers across the country, including Butch Miles, Duffy Jackson, Donny Osborne, Max Weinberg, Carl Palmer, and many, many others less well known. Apparently, the list included yours truly, as it turned out that he had been checking in with Charlie Ventura as to how well I was or was not doing.

These are the things people don't know about Buddy Rich. This was a man who cared. Weeks later, when my interview with him was published, I brought some newspapers to him when he was appearing at a music festival in suburban Philadelphia. Finally we were face to face, and he read every single word of my article—slowly and methodically—right there in front of me. "You hit the nail right on the head," he finally said when he finished. "Beautiful, man. Come on the bus."

That was, at that point in my being, the certifiable highlight of my life.

I was crushed when I heard of his passing in 1987. Like many others, I believed that when Buddy departed, there was just no one left.

My emotions were mixed in the mid-1990s when I entered into discussions with Cathy Rich, her husband, Steve Arnold, and Hudson Music's Paul Siegel and Rob Wallis (then heading DCI Music Video), to write and co-produce a two-part "video retrospective" on the life and music of Buddy Rich. My concern, believe it or not, had to do with "what Buddy might think," given his statement to me that "to be a part of history is bullshit."

With encouragement from Mel Tormé, who narrated the videos, and my long-time "significant other," singer Joy Adams, I went ahead with the project. I got to know Cathy and Steve, and Buddy's wife, Marie. I am more proud of the finished products, *Buddy Rich: Jazz Legend Volumes One* and *Two*, than anything I've ever done in my life. If nothing else, these videos are my legacy.

What Cathy and Steve have done to keep Buddy's name, image, and work alive over the years is unbelievable. By way of their determination and dedication, they have accomplished the almost impossible: bringing the music of Buddy Rich to more than one new generation.

Once, in a quiet moment, when we were almost finished shooting the *Jazz Legends* videos, I took Cathy aside. We were both a bit emotional by that time anyway, having talked for many hours about the life and career of a person who she loved and I idolized.

"I have to know something, Cathy," I said. "What do you think your father would think of all of this?"

"He would have loved it," Cathy answered.

Whether it was true or not, that made me feel good. What I know for certain is that Buddy Rich wanted the knowledge, and above all, the music to continue and to reach younger generations. It has. Indeed, as Cathy once sang many years ago on the legendary *Big Swing Face* LP, "The beat goes on." And it will, as long as drums are played.

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(Clinician)

Poncho Sanchez
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Airto Moreira
(Legendary Percussionist)

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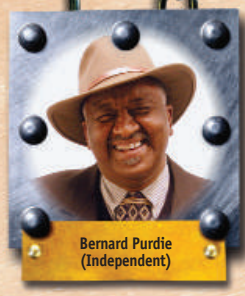
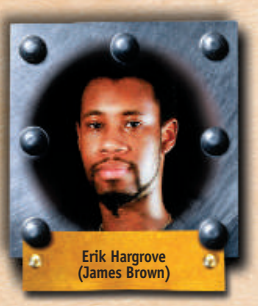

Bernard Purdie
(Independent)

Stephen Perkins
(Jane's Addiction)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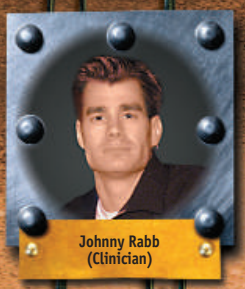
Johnny Rabb
(Clinician)

Richie "Gajate" Garcia
(Phil Collins)

Vicki Randle
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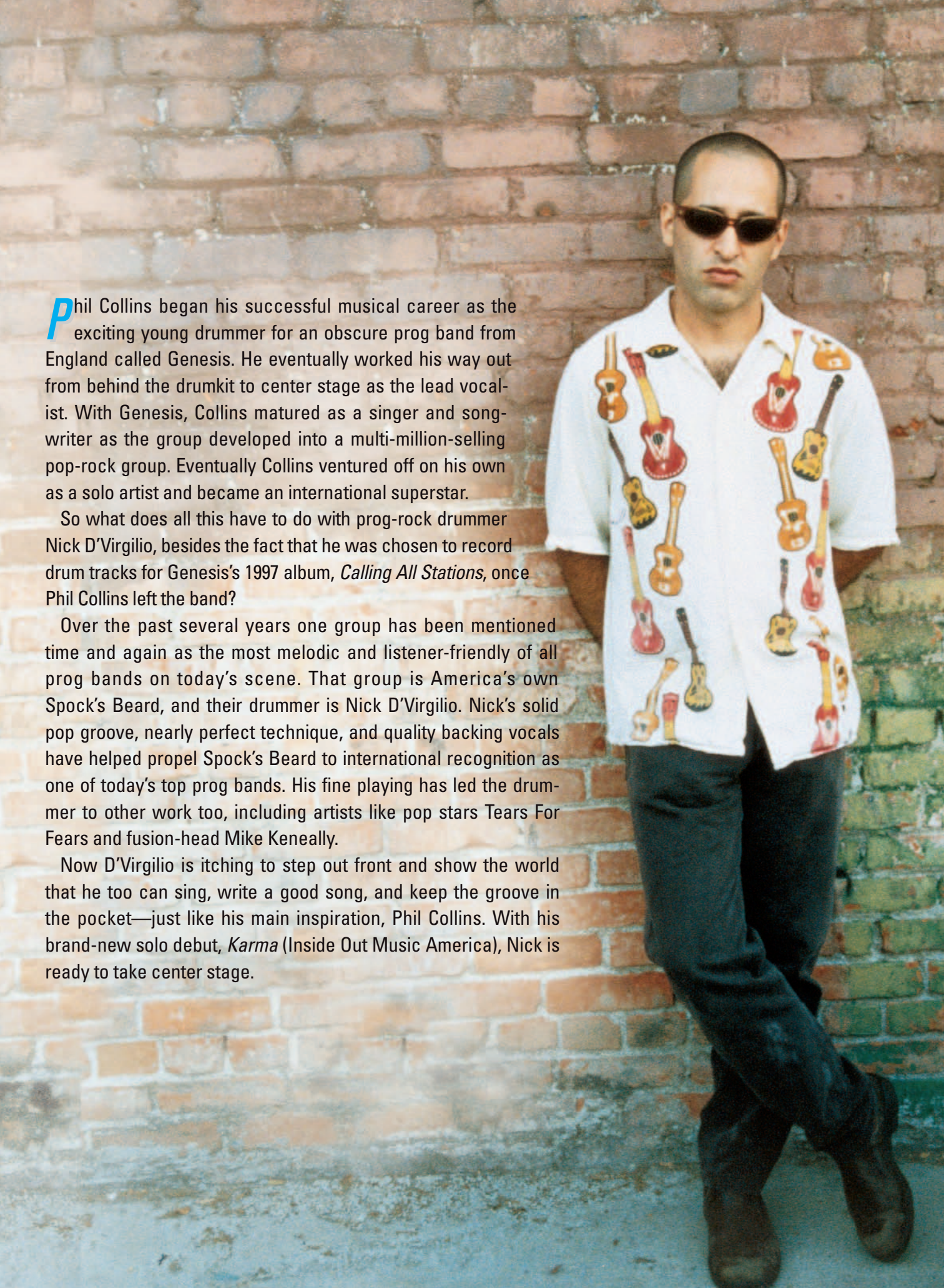
Spock's Beard's Nick D'Virgilio

Solo Karma

Story and Photos by Mike Haid



Phil Collins began his successful musical career as the exciting young drummer for an obscure prog band from England called Genesis. He eventually worked his way out from behind the drumkit to center stage as the lead vocalist. With Genesis, Collins matured as a singer and songwriter as the group developed into a multi-million-selling pop-rock group. Eventually Collins ventured off on his own as a solo artist and became an international superstar.

So what does all this have to do with prog-rock drummer Nick D'Virgilio, besides the fact that he was chosen to record drum tracks for Genesis's 1997 album, *Calling All Stations*, once Phil Collins left the band?

Over the past several years one group has been mentioned time and again as the most melodic and listener-friendly of all prog bands on today's scene. That group is America's own Spock's Beard, and their drummer is Nick D'Virgilio. Nick's solid pop groove, nearly perfect technique, and quality backing vocals have helped propel Spock's Beard to international recognition as one of today's top prog bands. His fine playing has led the drummer to other work too, including artists like pop stars Tears For Fears and fusion-head Mike Keneally.

Now D'Virgilio is itching to step out front and show the world that he too can sing, write a good song, and keep the groove in the pocket—just like his main inspiration, Phil Collins. With his brand-new solo debut, *Karma* (Inside Out Music America), Nick is ready to take center stage.

MD: Are you pursuing a solo career with your new release, or is this a personal goal brought to fruition?

Nick: Both. I've always wanted to do this, but for a host of different reasons I didn't pursue it earlier in my career. The biggest reason was that I didn't feel that my songwriting capabilities were where I wanted them to be. I've always been a fan of great music, and I always judged my songwriting against the bands that I respected and listened to. My songs didn't live up to any of them.

I've been singing since I was a little kid, and I've always been jealous of guitar players, because I've always wanted to be out in front of the drumset. It's funny because I've been playing drums all my life. I don't know why I picked drums as my main instrument.

I finally put some demos of my music together, and the guys at the Inside Out label in Germany said that if I wanted to put out a solo record they would set up a budget for me and release it. That was the big push I needed to finally go for it. I really do want to pursue a solo career. I want to sing as much as possible and get out from behind the drumkit.

MD: Does this solo effort allow you to do the things that you would normally not get to do in Spock's Beard?

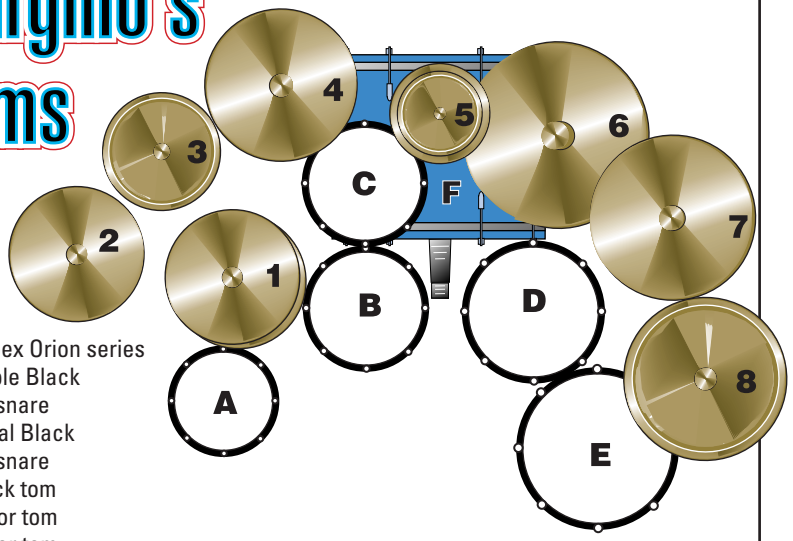
Nick: Yes. Spock's Beard centers around Neal Morse. He writes the majority of the material and is the lead vocalist. So the music of Spock's Beard is really a sound that belongs to Neal. I wanted to do something different that didn't sound like Spock's Beard. I'm a big fan of many styles of music. Spock's Beard is a prog band, and I wanted to branch out and do a wider variety of music.

MD: In listening to *Karma,* I heard many influences. The tune "Forgiven" brings to mind Rush, with a funkier vibe. Your voice almost sounds like Geddy Lee at times. Are Neil Peart and Rush influences of yours?

Nick: Rush had an influence on me for a short time in the late '70s. The first time I heard Rush was when my brother brought home the *Hemispheres* record from college. That was when I was into Rush and Neil Peart's drumming. But I wasn't really thinking about Rush when I wrote "Forgiven." It was more of a heavy, balls-to-the-wall rock vibe.

MD: The drum sounds on *Karma* are well recorded. They're very raw with not much processing, which allows for the listener to

D'Virgilio's Drums



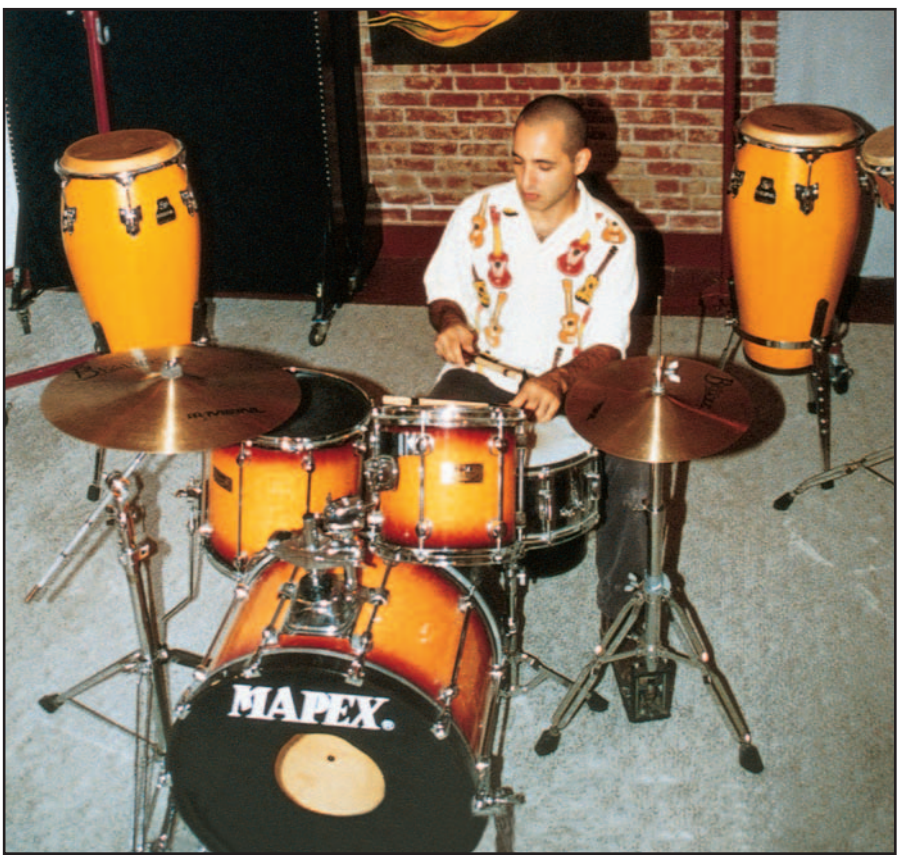
Drums: Mapex Orion series
- **A.** 5x10 maple Black Panther snare
- **B.** 5x12 metal Black Panther snare
- **C.** 10x12 rack tom
- **D.** 11x14 floor tom
- **E.** 14x16 floor tom
- **F.** 18x22 bass drum

Cymbals: Meinl
1. 14" Byzance hi-hats
2. 14" Byzance thin crash
3. 12" One Of A Kind splash with 12" China splash stacked on top
4. 16" Byzance medium crash
5. 10" One Of A Kind splash with 8" China splash stacked on top
6. 20" Byzance Ping ride
7. 18" Byzance medium crash
8. 18" Byzance China

Hardware: All Mapex, including their double pedal

Heads: Aquarian coated Satin Finish heads on tops of all drums, with clear High Frequency heads on bottoms, clear Force One model on bass drum batter

Sticks: johnnyraBB Straightneck 5A model with olive tip



easily understand what you're playing.

Nick: The credit for the recording of the drums goes to the engineer, Mike Johnson, and also to Lawn & Garden Supply Studio. That studio, which belonged to the late Kevin Gilbert, has a certain sound for drums that is incredible. The ambience of the room allows for a sound that doesn't need much processing. It also has an old Neve console, which gives the drums a warm, rich sound.

MD: Did you record all of your drum tracks there?

Nick: Actually, a couple of the drum tracks were recorded several years ago. I recorded the drums for the song "Anything" in 1997. I was planning on re-recording everything for this record. But when I gave the demo of "Anything" to the other players, they asked me why I was going to record new drum tracks. They all felt that the original tracks sounded great. There was a spontaneity and life to those tracks, so I kept them. Those tracks were recorded with my old Gretsch kit. All the other tracks were recorded with my Mapex kit using Aquarian drumheads. The cymbals were a mix of Paiste and Meinl, because I was still with Paiste when I recorded the tracks.

MD: Why was "Karma" chosen as the title for this release?

Nick: First of all, I named the project NDV because I wanted it to come across as a band rather than just me. Besides, D'Virgilio is too hard to say. [laughs] After I wrote the tune "Karma" it just seemed to fit the whole idea of what I was doing. I felt really good about it, and it seemed like the perfect title for the release.

MD: The tune "Karma" has a cool Middle Eastern vibe. Are you playing all the percussion on this song?

Nick: Yeah. The only part of the drumkit I used was a floor tom. It's actually four tracks of floor tom playing the same pattern, four tracks of djembe playing the same pattern, bongos, a shaker, a tambourine, and a trash can lid. It's got an interesting vocal pattern that is kind of a superimposed time signature over 4/4 that makes the groove sound like it's an odd meter, but the song is in 4/4.

MD: Have you studied Middle Eastern rhythms?

Nick: Yes, in fact the guitarist on the project, Rick Mussallam, is from Lebanon. He introduced me to a lot of new ideas. Years ago I studied at Dick Grove School of Music and branched out into Middle Eastern, Latin, and African rhythms. I played in an African percussion ensemble for a while, too. I love exploring the combination of all of these rhythms.

The cool thing about the Middle Eastern rhythms is that they sound more difficult than they really are. The patterns are made up of various parts that have different accents, which can lead to some very interesting song ideas.

MD: You had a long, close relationship with Kevin Gilbert. There's a track on *Karma* titled "The Game" that he co-wrote and also plays piano and guitar on. The lyrics sound as though they were written with Kevin in mind.

Nick: The lyrics are definitely about Kevin. "The Game" represents a gig, and the process of us going out to do a gig. I was always pushing Kevin to let me help write some songs with him. He was always working on new material, and everything he wrote sounded great to me. So I always wanted to write with him.

I finally got Kevin to take a few seconds and work on this piece that I brought in. We started working on it, and within a couple of hours we had the whole song arranged. We never got to finish it with lyrics because he passed away. Because this ended up being the only song I ever wrote with Kevin, I wanted the lyrics to be about him, as a kind of memorial.

MD: Can you explain a little about Kevin for anyone not aware of his achievements?

Nick: Kevin began in the Bay Area and was in a fairly popular rock band called Giraffe. He then formed the incredible pop band Toy Matinee with top producer Pat Leonard. Kevin was dating Sheryl Crow at the time, and she was the keyboardist in Toy Matinee for their live shows. He then brought Sheryl

Nick's Picks

These are the recordings Nick says best represent his playing.

Artist	Recording
Spock's Beard	Beware Of Darkness
Spock's Beard	Kindness Of Strangers
Spock's Beard	Day For Night
Spock's Beard	V
NDV (Nick D'Virgilio)	Karma
Kevin Gilbert	The Shaming Of The True
Dave Baerwald & The New Folk Underground	A Fine Mess
Roland Orzabal	Tomcats Screaming Outside

And these are the ones he listens to for inspiration.

Artist	Recording	Drummer
Genesis	Selling England By The Pound	Phil Collins
Yellowjackets	Yellowjackets	Will Kennedy
Tony Williams	Believe It	Tony Williams
Bill Bruford	One Of A Kind	Bill Bruford
The Beatles	all	Ringo Starr
Led Zeppelin	Led Zeppelin	John Bonham
Led Zeppelin	Led Zeppelin II	John Bonham
Led Zeppelin	Houses Of The Holy	John Bonham
Steely Dan	The Royal Scam	Rick Marotta, Bernard Purdie
Tears For Fears	The Seeds Of Love	Phil Collins, Manu Katché, Simon Phillips, Chris Hughes
James Brown	all	various

MD's MP3s DOWNLOADS

Go to www.moderndrummer.com to check out a free MP3 download from Nick D'Virgilio's CD, *Karma*.

into the studio and was very involved in her big debut record as a songwriter and musician. He was also a very in-demand engineer for people like Madonna, Ice-T, and many other artists. Sadly, he passed away in his prime. He was an amazing talent.

MD: Are you still working with Tears For Fears?

Nick: Yes I am. It's been a while since we've toured, but I've already recorded the drum tracks for a new record that they're working on now. I've also recently started working with Mike Keneally and his group Beer For Dolphins. It's extremely challenging material and a lot of fun. Mike is an amazing artist, and I'm honored to be working with him.

MD: We haven't talked about your experience of recording with Genesis. How the heck did that come about?

Nick: I heard from a few friends that Genesis was having auditions for the drum chair because Phil was leaving the band. At the time, I was touring with Tears For Fears and happened to be in London when I heard the news, so I found out where Genesis's management company was located and went there with a Spock's Beard CD, *The Light*, and told them I was playing with Tears For Fears the next night. I invited them to the show so they could see me play and said that if there was any chance in the world that I could get an audition, I would love one.

Well, I went through the whole TFF tour not knowing if they came to the gig or checked out my playing. Then I think it was three months after that when I got a call from Genesis's producer, Nick Davis, asking me if I could send a DAT with some more music so they could hear some different things. I did that, and they called back a few weeks later and said they wanted me to come to their studio, The Farm, for an audition. Needless to say, I was freaking out. Genesis was my favorite band in the world when I was growing up. I played to their records every day.

Anyway, I went on a short tour with Jonatha Brooke, and right from there I flew to England and did the audition. I played to all of the tracks they had put together for the new record, and they recorded what I played to hear roughly what I might do. I was there for three days, and then I flew home. I got another call from Nick Davis a little while later, saying they wanted me back to do the record. As you might imagine, I was a very happy guy. I went back and recorded for about a week, and that was that.

About being in the studio with those guys, well, it was amazing. They were very sweet. I almost didn't believe that I was on a Genesis record until I saw the finished copy. As I've said, Phil was my favorite drummer growing up, and to be on a Genesis record was exciting, fun, strange, and a little unbelievable. I mean, that was *his* band for twenty years, and there I was, doing his job. It was bizare for me, but very satisfying.

MD: Getting back to your project, where do you get the inspiration for your lyrics?

Nick: Most of my lyrics are very personal. Several of the songs are about relationships. Those come directly from personal experiences with my wife. We were having some problems with our marriage around 1996, and a lot of emotions were coming out in my writing at that time. The song "Forgiven" speaks directly about how I was feeling at that time. The lyrics for "Anything" talk about how I didn't want to be like my father when I was a teenager. Now it's ironic because I'm more like him than I thought I would ever be. It's something you can't hide. You *are* where you come from.

MD: Since you play so many instruments on this release, how are you going to han-

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Nick D'Virgilio
Spock's Beard

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Nick D'Virgilio

dle these duties in a live situation?

Nick: I'll have another drummer play on most of the songs, and I'll play a lot of guitar and sing out front. I'll go back and play drums a little, but mostly remain out front as the lead vocalist.

MD: You do gigs already where it's just you and another musician, and you just play guitar and sing.

Nick: Yeah, Neal Morse from Spock's Beard and I go to Europe and play in the pubs. We play in Germany at Irish pubs, which are very popular there. So Neal and I booked a tour. We play a variety of cover tunes and even some Spock's Beard tunes. I play guitar and sing. It's really fun. I may have to start my solo career in the same fashion, as an acoustic duo, until I can build a following.

MD: You've mentioned that Phil Collins is a big influence of yours. Who are some of the other drummer/artists that inspire you to pursue your own solo career?

Nick: In the specific way that I'm doing my project, I don't really know of any other drummers who are doing what I do.

MD: Are you aiming for a pop career in the direction of what Don Henley or Phil Collins have achieved?

Nick: Don Henley has influenced me more as a singer/songwriter than as a drummer. The Eagles were more about a simple pop direction, so the drumming was never really a focus of the music. In addition to singing, Phil Collins, especially when he was with Genesis, played far more intricately. So what I'm trying to achieve is more along the lines of what Phil has done.

MD: The instrumental song "Untitled" is the first track on *Karma* that clearly introduces the prog vibe.

Nick: That tune came out of a jam session at Lawn & Garden Studios when I was messing around by myself one night. I began the melody on guitar, added more guitar riffs, and then built from there. I wanted to include some music that would appeal to the fans of Spock's Beard as well. A lot of my roots come out of that type of music.

The opening track, "The River Is Wide," is also a more prog-oriented song than most of the other material. But I wanted to kick off the record with something that the majority of Spock's Beard fans could relate to. Then I'd ease them

into the pop stuff.

MD: "Paying The Price" has the Spock's Beard vibe going on.

Nick: Yeah, that's my one epic. Every Spock's Beard release has a long, epic piece. I set out to try to capture that vibe. That's also the only tune on the CD where the lyrics don't come from a personal experience. I was trying to come up with a story line that had some social value. In America you hear so much about dysfunctional families. Being a father, I've always wanted to provide a solid family foundation for my kids so that when they come home from school, they can just focus on school stuff and having fun. So many kids grow up with a raw deal in their family lives, with lousy parents. So the lyrics on "Paying The Price" deal with that unfortunate subject.

MD: There's a climactic point in "Paying The Price" that sounds like something Keith Moon would have done with The Who.

Nick: Yeah, it was a direct rip-off of that Who vibe. I love that whole rock thing where the band builds the intensity and Keith Moon goes crazy on the drums. There's a Mike Keneally tune on his *Dancing* CD that has the same thing. That's actually what inspired me to add that section, but even Keneally's tune is a direct Who rip-off.

MD: It seems that you saved the heavy drumming chops for the last track, "Unknowing."

Nick: I guess if you're looking for fancy drumming stuff, then that's where you'll find it. The majority of the record is groove-oriented. The groove is where my heart is ninety percent of the time when I'm drumming. That song just seemed to fit the mood for stretching a little. I tried to pull off all my Mike Portnoy fills and really ham it up.

MD: What are your thoughts on playing for the music yet still being able to fulfill your need to stretch as a player?

Nick: Most of the time I'm thinking about playing less rather than more. In Spock's Beard they're always trying to get me to play more. When I do any type of recording session I instinctively try to play less. I don't know why. Before I even think about throwing in any chops, I always concentrate on what the song needs. That's really what motivates me. Chops are secondary for me. This attitude came later in my career. I lived for fusion drumming for a lot of years. But now, simpler is better. And playing simple is not easy. You have to work hard to make it groove and make it feel good through a whole song.

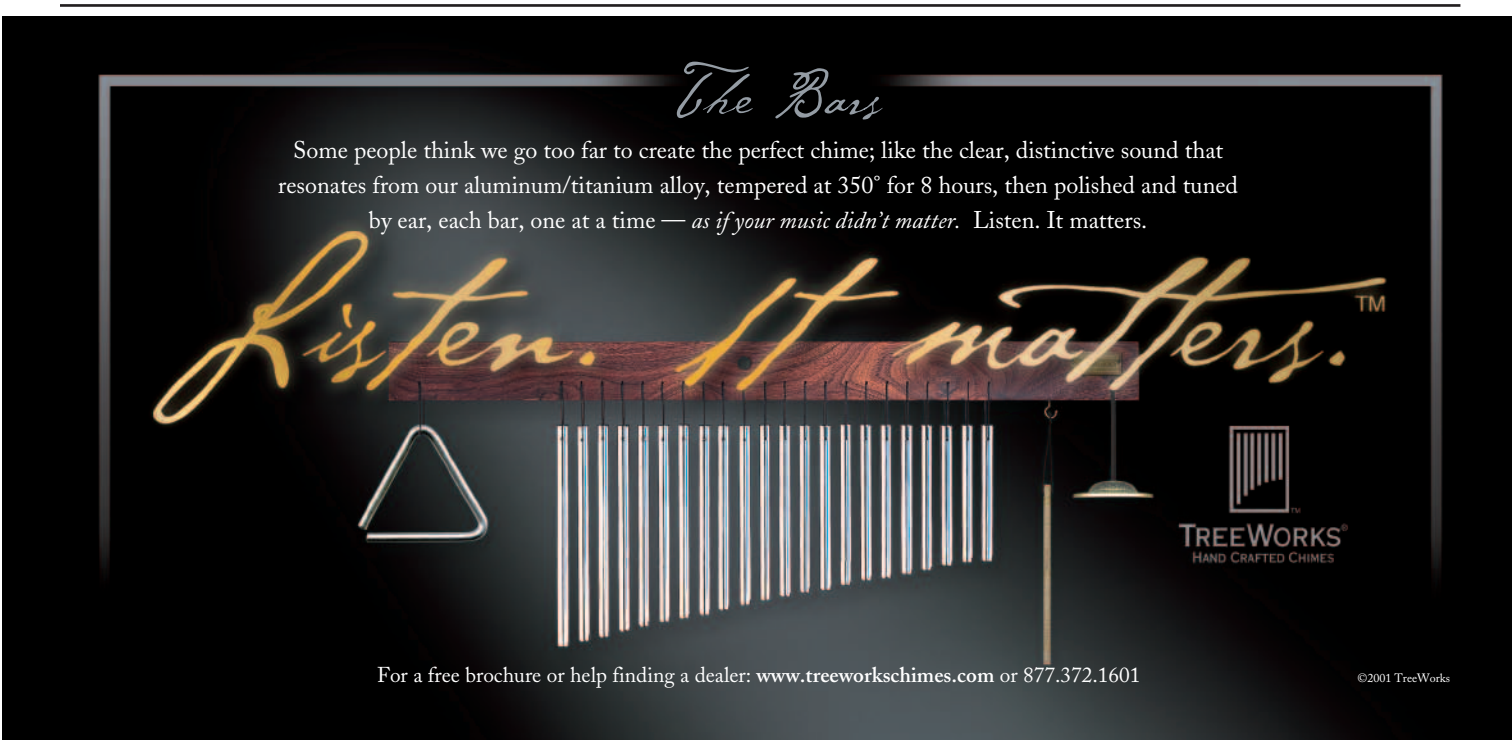
MD: Do you do a drum solo when you perform live with Spock's Beard?

Nick: Sometimes, but I don't always know what to do when I solo. They're always improvised, and I'll try to find certain chops that work and remember them for the next solo. I've never been a huge fan of drum solos. They bore me. I want to hear melody and music along with them.

I remember going to see Van Halen in concert, and Alex played a drum solo for twenty minutes. His feet never stopped! It was unbelievable and it was a great solo. Watching Virgil Donati solo is amazing too. But I'll never be able to play like that in my entire life.

There's a song that Spock's Beard does live called "Jibberish," and I'll usually solo in that song while they keep playing. I really stretch out and go crazy on that one. I like having a musical base to work from. Sometimes I'll listen to old records of live drum solos to hear what guys like Ian Paice and John Bonham used to do to get the crowd going in their solos, and I'll

"I'm hoping that when people hear my record they'll get a lot out of it in a musical way. But I'm also hopeful that drummers will get a lot out of what I'm trying to say as a player."



try to incorporate some of that into mine.

MD: What's that little "sneak attack" instrumental piece at the end, after the last tune?

Nick: That was a jam that happened by accident when we were setting up for one of the tunes. I started doing this double bass thing, and the rest of the guys joined in. We all ended together, so we used it as a special bonus track. So don't stop the CD after the last song ends or you'll miss it.

MD: Did you do all of the programming of loops and sequenced drums on the CD?

Nick: Yeah. "Dream In Red" has some drum machine, and "Dysfunction" is all programmed with loops and things. I'm really into programming that stuff more than ever. I'm into the whole recording side of making loops and manipulating stuff on the computer. It's a lot of fun.

MD: Did you record your own loops?

Nick: Some I recorded myself and some I took right off of the loop CDs that you can buy at Guitar Center.

MD: In what order do you record your parts for the songs?

Nick: Typically I'll lay down a click track with a drum machine and record the acoustic guitar part first. Then I'll lay down a scratch bass line. Next, I'll record the drum parts and then go back and fix the bass guitar track.

MD: Did you use a lot of Pro Tools editing?

Nick: The project was recorded on Cubase because that's what I have at home. I've been using it for years. It does a lot of what Pro Tools does. The song "Karma" actually developed from my learning how to use Pro Tools at Lawn & Garden Supply Studios. I was messing around with different percussion grooves and started layering stuff. I got crazy and began doubling, tripling, and quadrupling certain parts.

There are a lot of things that computers can do that are helpful, but there's also a lot of things that can go wrong, and it can easily take all of your musical inspiration away. If you run into a glitch that you can't figure out, you can spend hours trying to pinpoint it—and then you've wasted valuable recording time on fixing computer problems. But the way you can manipulate music and sounds with computers is phenomenal.

MD: What would you like the listeners of your first solo release to come away with?

Nick: I'm hoping that when people hear my record they'll get a lot out of it in a musical way. But I'm also hopeful that drummers will get a lot out of what I'm trying to say as a player. I tried to make it as enjoyable as possible for *any* listener. I really hope that people realize that I can sing. I really don't care that much about my guitar playing on the record because that's not my focus. I'm hoping they'll focus on the music and my voice.

This record is not about my drum chops, even though there's a bit of that all over it. It's interesting to me that I started playing drums in the first place. I just started playing when I was a kid, and it came easy for me. I never took a drum lesson until I was eighteen years old. But there's always been a side of me that has wanted to be out front as an entertainer. This solo release has finally given me a chance to try to do that. I guess now we'll just have to see what happens.

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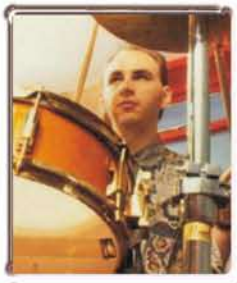

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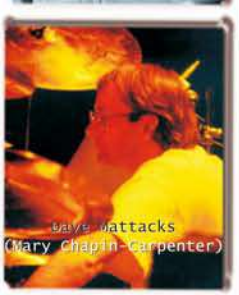

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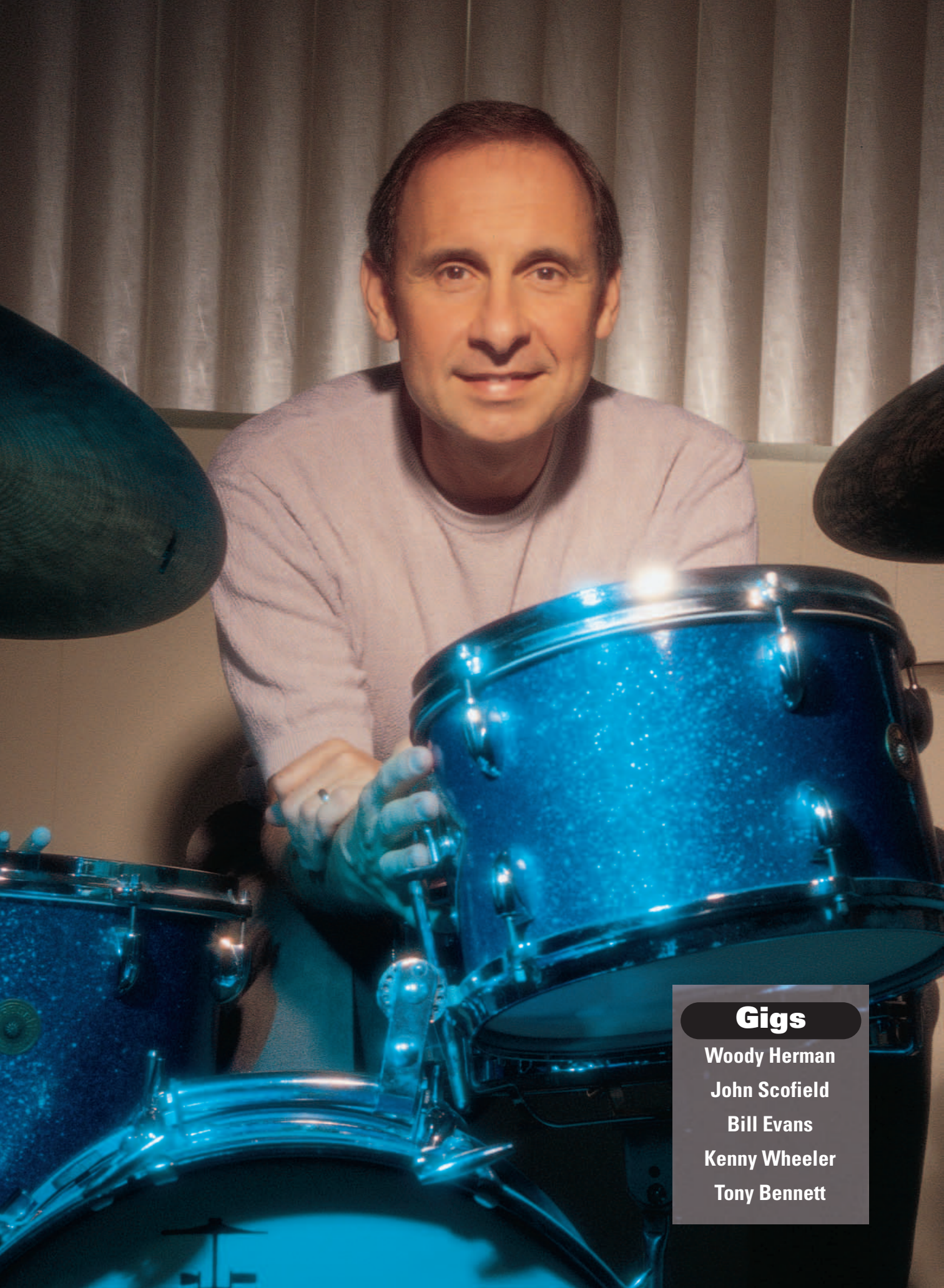
The Artistry Of Joe La Barbera

Story by Rick Mattingly • Photos by Alex Solca

You have to be careful who you show off in front of, as Joe La Barbera learned early in his career. "I was working with a singer named Frankie Randall," Joe recalls. "He had an offer to open for Buddy Rich in Las Vegas for a month. So I was playing Buddy's drums with Buddy's band while they backed Frankie, and then Buddy would do a set. One night we were doing the show, and I got off a pretty good fill. Buddy pulled me aside later and said, 'Hey, kid. When you're playing with *my* band, just go boom-boom,'" La Barbera says, cracking up at the memory.

"But Buddy treated me great," Joe quickly adds. "I saw the other side of the Buddy people talk about when they refer to those tapes where he's ranting and raving. We were sharing a dressing room, and the guys would file by our room to get to theirs. He'd single a couple of guys out and give them all kinds of hell. But once they'd passed, he'd turn around and give me a wink, like, 'Don't pay any attention to this. I'm just tightening up the ranks.'"



Gigs

Woody Herman

John Scofield

Bill Evans

Kenny Wheeler

Tony Bennett

Although Joe was barely out of his teens at that point, he'd been a professional musician since he was six years old, playing in a family band that included his parents as well as his older brothers Pat and John. Pat went on to play saxophone with such leaders as Rich and Elvin Jones, and John became a noted arranger and composer for such bandleaders as Rich, Woody Herman, Bill Watrous, and others.

Joe went on to work with Gap Mangione, Woody Herman's big band, Chuck Mangione, and John Scofield before joining The Bill Evans Trio, with whom he worked until Evans' untimely death in 1980. Afterwards, La Barbera worked with singer Tony Bennett for twelve years, and since then has worked and recorded with such artists as Conte Candoli, Bud Shank, Alan Broadbent, Kenny Wheeler, and The WDR Big Band. Since 1994 he has been on the faculty of The California Institute For The Arts (CalArts).

La Barbera has also been leading his own group since the early 1990s, and with that band he has recently released his first album as a leader: *The Joe La Barbera Quintet Live* on the Jazz Compass label (www.jazzcompass.com). Joe's album is one of four initial releases on the new label, of which Joe is a co-owner. He also plays on new Jazz Compass releases by The Tom Warrington Trio (*Corduroy Road*) and Clay Jenkins (*Azure Eyes*).

Joe's playing is solidly in the mainstream jazz tradition, and he is equally at home within a trio or a big band. His level of interaction with soloists is more that of a partner in the improvisational adventure than of an accompanist, and yet he is totally supportive of the soloist throughout the process. His own solos display plenty of chops as he does variations on classic bebop phrases. But it's the musicality that lingers in the memory after the specific licks have passed by.

"What really helped shape my drumming was the influence of non-drummers I listened to in depth, like Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins, Miles, and Coltrane."

MD: I've always been impressed by the way you can project just as much momentum and intensity through the drums when you're playing softly with an acoustic trio as when you're digging in with a big band.

Joe: It's something I worked toward. First of all, when I was coming up in the clubs in the '60s, bass players didn't have amplifiers, and pianos weren't miked. So you were playing at a different volume level. You had to make it happen at *all* the levels. It couldn't just be intense when it was burning and be lukewarm at all the other dynamic ranges. You had to make it intense all the time. Even on ballads, there's an insistency, even though it's not in your face. But it has the energy no matter what.

As far as *how* I do it, you've got to be focused on what you're trying to achieve. When you concentrate on something, it automatically comes out in your playing, although it may take a little while for you to refine it. Technically, I don't know what else to tell you, except maybe get a cheap record player and play along with records.

MD: In fact, once when I complimented you on your touch, you explained that when you were a kid, your older brother Pat would pick out records he thought you should play along with. You said you only had a little record player and no headphones, so you had to play soft to hear the record over your drumming.

Joe: That's absolutely true. Some of those really fast tempos, like on *Miles In Europe* or *Four And More*, were ridiculous, but I tried to do it. Somehow it worked.

The first jazz record I remember Pat bringing home was *The Lester Young Story*, and on that album there's a tune called "Gigantic Blues" that featured Jo Jones. I really tried to play like Jo Jones because Pat was trying to play like Lester Young. But there are a couple of tracks on that album that feature a more bop-oriented rhythm section with Connie Kay on drums, so I was also hearing the transition.

Then Pat got a record called *Birdland All-Stars On Tour* with Kenny Clarke on drums. We wore that record out. What Klook [Kenny Clarke] did on that album relates to something about Philly Joe

Joe's Drums

"I've used the same basic setup for thirty years," says Joe. "When I was coming up, all the great drummers were playing Gretsch, so that was the sound I was hearing out of the drumset."

You can see one of Joe's Gretsch kits on the cover of his new solo album. "That's a 1960s round-badge kit that is the same vintage as my first Gretsch set, which was stolen in 1977," La Barbera says. "I also have a blue-sparkle round-badge set, and both of them have 18" bass drums, 12" and 14" toms, and 5" snare drums. I've got another round badge set from the '60s that's my big band set. It's got a 20" bass drum, 13" and 16" toms, and a 6" snare drum. My newest drumset is one I got when I was with Chuck Mangione in the '70s; it has 10" and 12" toms, a 14" floor tom, and an 18" bass drum. If I'm doing a trio I'll usually take a kit with two toms; if I've got horns to deal with or it's my own band I usually use the set with the three toms."

La Barbera uses Aquarian Modern Vintage drumheads. "They're very close to calfskin heads in warmth," Joe explains.

Among the cymbals Joe chooses from are some prized "old Ks." He often uses a 20" old K ride, a new 18" K Constantinople crash, and 13" hi-hats with a K top and a Brilliant-finish A Zildjian New Beat bottom. For big band work he adds a 20" Zildjian Oriental cymbal. The hi-hats are 13" with a K top and a Brilliant A Zildjian New Beat bottom.

La Barbera uses Vic Firth SD4 drumsticks and Calato brushes with wood handles. His hardware is DW. For the bass drum pedal, Joe prefers a DW nylon-strap model.

In his younger days, Joe had his drums and cymbals at extreme angles. "Back when I had my drums at ridiculous angles, I was doing one of the Mangione albums and Shelly Manne came by the session. He sat down behind my kit and said, 'This is great! If you drop a stick, it rolls right down the cymbals and drums into your lap,'" Joe recalls, laughing at the memory. "And he was right!"

Jones on Bill Evans' *Everybody Digs* album: They played those entire albums with just snare drum, bass drum, hi-hat, and ride cymbal—no tom-toms. But the music they made is amazing.

They had control of the drumset in its most basic form. And you've got players today like Leon Parker who have made a jump back to that kind of minimalist approach. I think the idea from the bop-pers was that if you could make it happen with these few items, then when you

Jazz Speak

Here are the recordings that Joe La Barbera says best represent his playing.

Artist	Recording
Woody Herman	The Raven Speaks
John Scofield	Live '77
Bill Evans	Paris Concerts I and II
Pat La Barbera	Deep In A Dream
Gary Foster	Make Your Own Fun
Conte Candoli	Portrait Of A Count
Bud Shank	Silver Storm
Baseline (w/Hein van de Geyn and John Abercrombie)	Why Really
Kenny Wheeler	All The More
Joe La Barbera Quintet	Live

And these are the ones that he listens to for inspiration.

Artist	Recording	Drummer
Lester Young	The Lester Young Story	Jo Jones, Connie Kay
Various	Birdland All Stars On Tour	Kenny Clarke
Shelly Manne	Shelly Manne And His Men At The Blackhawk	Shelly Manne
Dave Brubeck Quartet	Jazz Impressions Of Chicago	Joe Morello
Miles Davis	Kind Of Blue	Jimmy Cobb
Art Blakey And The Jazz Messengers	The Big Beat	Art Blakey
Miles Davis	Milestones	Philly Joe Jones
John Coltrane	Live At Birdland	Elvin Jones
Miles Davis	Miles In Europe	Tony Williams
Roy Haynes	Cracklin'	Roy Haynes

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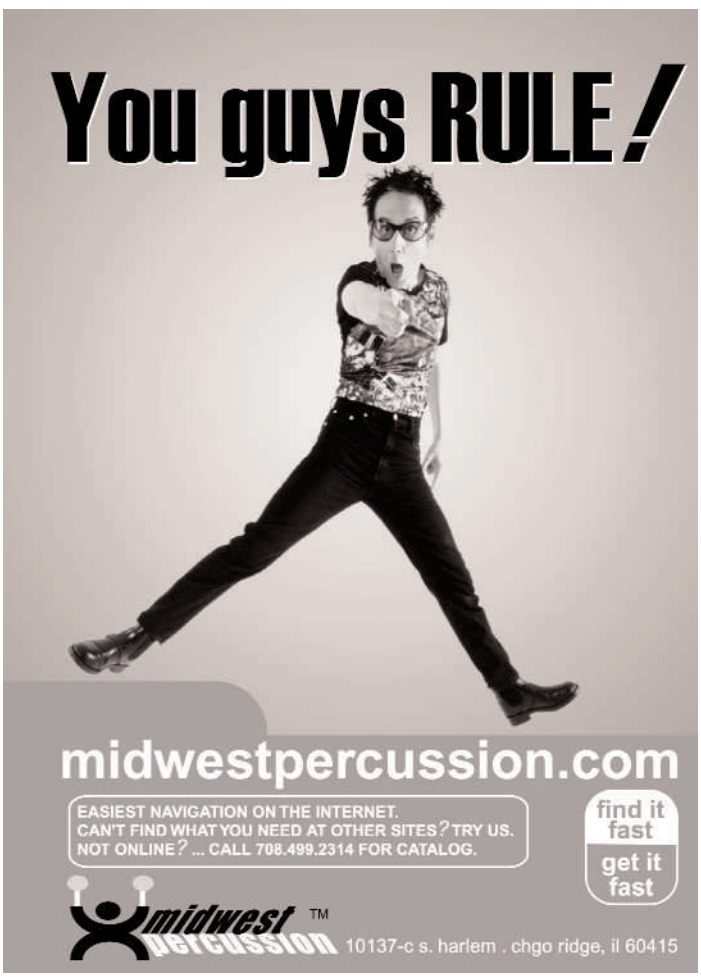

added more drums and cymbals, you had more ways to express yourself. But to be able to do it with just a few things was kind of a test. *[See this month's Jazz Drummers' Workshop for an in-depth look at "stripped-down" kit approaches.]*

MD: I assume that Art Blakey was one of your influences, judging by one of the tunes you wrote for your new album, "Message From Art (For Art Blakey)."

Joe: One day this tune came to me and I thought it sounded like Blakey. A friend of my brother originally turned me on to Art. The first record he played for me was "Caravan." I couldn't believe what I was hearing—the amount of energy and sound that Blakey got out of the drumset blew me away. Blakey's *The Big Beat* album was on a jukebox, believe it or not, at a pizzeria in our hometown. So we would go in there every night and play it until the owner took it off the jukebox because he got so sick of us playing it.

MD: In the recent Hal Leonard publication *Drum Standards*, one of the transcriptions you did was Blakey's solo on "Paper Moon."

Joe: That solo is constructed beautifully. It's simple but it builds very effectively, and the way he phrases across the downbeat of the bridge is great. He's not boxed into four- and eight-bar segments.

MD: When you were coming up, did you memorize solos note for note?

Joe: I learned that Blakey solo because it was just one chorus. But I didn't generally learn solos note for note; I would just cop particular licks. A lot of it was stuff that everybody was doing. There's a standard repertoire of bebop language that all the drummers played—Max, Philly, Roy Haynes—but they all sounded completely different doing it. So I learned from all of those guys. There's one lick I know I got from Klook that I've used in a couple of solos that are on records. He did it with both hands together on the snare and floor tom.

But I play the first note of the phrase as a flam between the floor tom and snare, and then finish it out on the snare drum.

I've learned from so many drummers. A friend of ours had a lot of Shelly Manne records, and boy, when I heard that it *really* took hold. So I listened to a lot of Shelly's drumming. And I've never gone to see Elvin where I didn't come away feeling better for it. To me, he just makes playing drums the right thing to do, and I'm happy to be playing the same instrument.

But what really helped shape my drumming was the influence of non-drummers I listened to in depth, like Bill Evans, Sonny Rollins, Miles, and Coltrane. There's a melodic flow to the way they play their solos that I try to emulate. Also, they all incorporate particular rhythms into their solos that have helped shape my solos.

One comment I get from musicians a lot is that they can hear the changes going by when I play a solo. Well, that's because I'm playing off the flow of the chord progression. That's something I picked up from other instrumentalists. So I always encourage my students to listen to people other than drummers. You need to be aware of what each instrumentalist

brings to the music and how you can enhance that music from your standpoint as a drummer.

MD: That reminds me of another big-brother story. Elvin Jones told me that one of the greatest lessons he had was when his older brother Hank told him to play along with a solo Bud Powell album.

Joe: Ooooh, that would be a great lesson! The way guys like Bud Powell shaped their solos, they automatically left spaces for the drummers to contribute. A lot of times today, in student performers, I don't hear that space being offered, because they're not really aware of what's going on. When you learn technique out of a book, you're not really taught how to make your part fit with something else. That's something you can only experience when you're playing with somebody. You have to learn how to react to each other.

You can tell in about eight bars if a soloist is going to work with you or if he's just going to ride over the rhythm section and pay no attention to what's going on back there. A lot of times my students get frustrated because they don't feel like they're fitting into the group. I'll listen to a little bit of who they're playing with and realize that they're not getting an opportunity to contribute. They're being blocked out, and when that happens, I tell them to just pull back because there's no space being left. If the soloist is filling every beat, the poor piano player or guitar player has to find space to get that harmonic information in there, and that doesn't leave any room at all for the drummer to contribute. So just play the ride cymbal and wait for the next soloist. This is the kind of thing you learn when you study the whole band as opposed to just your instrument.

MD: There was certainly space for you to contribute within The Bill Evans Trio.

Joe: Bill's music let me play the full spectrum of what I was capable of doing. When I got the gig, a couple of people said, "You're going to have to play quiet with that trio all night long, and you won't get to stretch out." That was absolutely false. He gave me plenty of room to play, and dynamically it went from a whisper to a roar. So it really was up to the player to take the initiative and make it what you could. We never had to follow a certain rule or play within a certain set of parameters. It was about taking the music wherever it could go.

Bill could set you up and give you space to contribute to the music so beautifully that it elevated you automatically. But he could also use that space to instruct. If I was getting too repetitive or was boxing him in on a melody that had a specific space, he only had to fill that space one time and I would realize that he wanted me to get off it. So by example, I was learning a lot from Bill. I got better at soloing, although when I listen to some of those records now I tend to feel I was repetitive. But I was growing in terms of what I was leaving out, too. That's another thing I learned from Bill. Just being around him was a fantastic music lesson all the time. He didn't want to talk about the music. He wanted to play it and let it evolve, which is the way it should be.

MD: There is a high level of interplay between you and the other musicians on the three new Jazz Compass albums you play on. And your brush playing is especially nice on The Tom Warrington Trio's *Corduroy Road* album.

Tempo Modulation

After Joe had been in The Bill Evans Trio for about six months, he and bassist Marc Johnson got a call from Evans, who told them they had to have a rehearsal. "Marc and I thought we were in trouble," La Barbera recalls, laughing. "We went to Bill's apartment and he said, 'We don't really need to rehearse. I just wanted some company.'

"But since we were there, he asked us to take a look at a way to shift tempo that he and bassist Eddie Gomez had worked on, but that they had never brought into the music. The idea was to shift to a slower tempo by playing two bars of dotted-quarter notes, and the dotted quarters would then become the tempo of the quarter note."

Joe says that you can also start the dotted quarters on the downbeat. The last dotted quarter then falls on the "&" of beat 4 in the second bar, providing an anticipated downbeat (or "push beat") into the new tempo.

"To get back to the original tempo," Joe explains, "play two measures of quarter-note triplets, and that becomes the tempo of the quarter note."

Joe used this method of shifting tempo at the end of drum breaks in "My Romance" on the Bill Evans albums *The Paris Concert, Edition 1* and *Turn Out The Stars* (box set).

Joe La Barbera

Joe: I've been playing dance jobs since I was six years old, and you played the brushes ninety percent of the time. So I had brushes in my hands a *lot*. Shelly was the first guy who really knocked me out with brushes. Right through the history of this music there has been some great brush playing: Vernel Fournier with Ahmad Jamal, Philly Joe Jones, Ed Thigpen with The Oscar Peterson Trio—I just marvel at that brush playing. Have you ever heard The Lester Young Trio with Nat Cole and Buddy Rich? Buddy does some fabulous brush playing.

MD: In a clinic I attended, you emphasized using the whole surface of the brush, not just the tips.

Joe: It sounds fuller that way. This is nothing new; I've got a video of Louis Armstrong from 1933 recorded in Sweden, and I don't know who the drummer is, but he has absolutely the smoothest left-hand sweep I've ever seen on the brushes, and he has all the bristles down on the drumhead. So that's what I go for. It helps get a rebound, too.

A lot of kids today are really interested in brushes, which does my heart good. What's interesting to me is that with this generation of drummers coming up, most of them have learned matched grip from the start. And invariably when I get them they want to switch over to traditional grip because of the brushes. They seem to feel that's the right approach for jazz. I always encourage them to stay with the grip they're most comfortable with. If you're playing great with matched grip, why mess it up?

MD: You're known primarily as a small group drummer, but you've had some big band experience. A lot of drummers fall either into the Buddy Rich or Mel Lewis school, but when I heard you with a college big band recently, I heard both of those approaches in your playing.

Joe: They both influenced me. I remember talking to Buddy about big band drummers versus small band drummers, and he said, "You know, when I was coming up, you were a *drummer*. You played big band, you played small groups, you did everything." Fortunately for me, when I was getting into the business there were still opportunities to play with big bands.

MD: Drummers who have big band experience seem to play with more awareness of the form of a tune.

Joe: Yeah. You realize the responsibility of the chair that you're sitting in. You're the drummer, and your job is to keep things moving and to keep it together. You have to be stimulating, but make it secure for the rest of the band. That same concept worked with Woody Herman and with Bill Evans, too.

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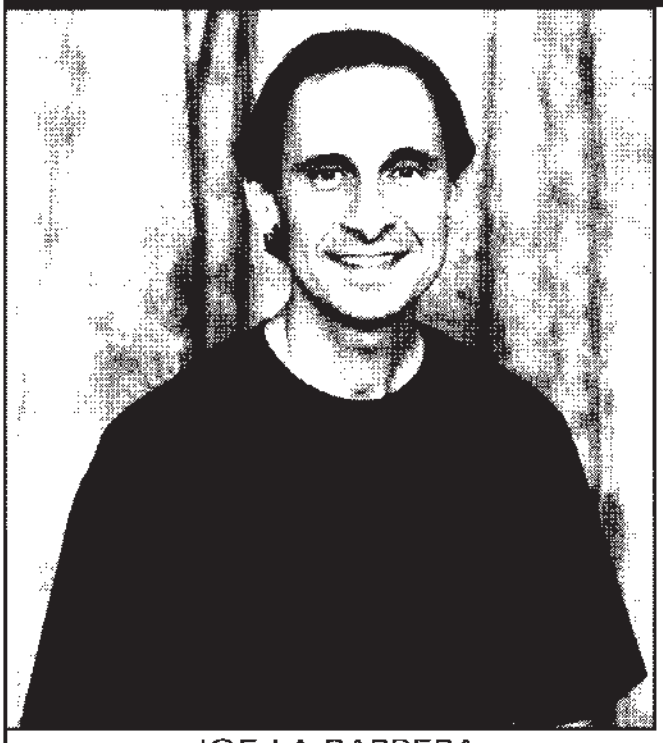

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In The Clear

The Past, Present, And Future Of Acrylic Drums

by Jim DeRogatis

"I just want to say one word to you—just one word."
"Yes, sir?"
"Are you listening?"
"Yes, I am."
"Plastics!"
"Exactly how do you mean?"
"There's a great future in plastics!"

—Mr. McGuire (Walter Brooke) and Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman)
from the 1967 film *The Graduate*

Since its first widespread use in 1951 via everything from the ubiquitous Tupperware to the sublime Eames chair, "plastic" has been synonymous with "the future." So while drums have always been the most traditional of instruments—a Neanderthal banging on a hollow log was probably the first drummer—it was inevitable that someone would eventually build a "better" drum by turning from wood to synthetics.

Bill Zickos is generally acknowledged as the father of clear plastic drums. The founder of the Kansas City–based Zickos Drum Company built the first Plexiglass drums in 1959, though he didn't formally start production until a decade later. In the early '70s, Fibes' Crystalite sets were the first acrylic drums to win significant popularity among rock players. But it was Ludwig that built the most famous clear drums ever, thanks largely to a one-of-a-kind drummer, John Bonham, who used an amber Vistalite set in the 1976 Led Zeppelin concert film, *The Song Remains The Same*.

ludwig

Though many other manufacturers briefly hopped on the acrylic bandwagon (and just as quickly leaped off), these three American companies remained the biggest names in the field until the late '70s, when a number of unique problems combined to halt production.

Now, after years when they were viewed as a historic novelty, acrylic drums are experiencing a renaissance. There's a booming market in vintage kits, as well as a thriving niche for new sets manufactured by a revitalized Zickos and Fibes. And last year, Ludwig made headlines by offering a new Vistalite set for the first time in twenty-one years.

Are drummers experiencing a strange nostalgia for a now-outdated vision of the future—something akin to the craze for space-age bachelor pad music or retro furniture that looks like *The Jetsons*? Or are acrylic drums really a viable alternative to wood? Most drummers agree that they look cool. But what do they *sound* like? And how do you tune, clean, and care for them?

We'll look at all of these questions in turn, starting with acrylic drums' origins.

A Brief History Of Clear Drums

A former big band drummer and veteran tinkerer, Bill Zickos was searching for a better sound rather than a unique look when he made his first prototype drums from Plexiglass (a particular brand of clear plastic; "acrylic" is the generic name for the material). Bill followed the same method everyone used, and which still prevails today. The plastic is cut from huge sheets, heated (most manufacturers use pizza ovens, though Cream's Ginger Baker is rumored to have made a set from Perspex warmed on a kitchen stove), shaped, bonded at the seams with adhesive, and finished by hand.

It took a decade of on-again, off-again experiments for Zickos to perfect a drum with a strong, clean, and consistent tone, as well as a "dry" but cutting sound free from distracting overtones. But there was one problem: When he tested his see-through drums on small jazz combo gigs, the volume blew his fellow musicians off the bandstand. Thankfully, musical styles were changing. "We didn't originally go after the rock drum market, but Bill found that the drums projected a lot better and had a lot more resonance and life than most other drums, and that was perfect for rock 'n' roll," says Zickos' son-in-law, John Brazelton.

In 1969, Zickos sold its first professional kit to Ron Bushy, the drummer with heavy metal pioneers Iron Butterfly. Every night, as Bushy performed the epic drum solo from "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida," his clear Zickos set reflected a rainbow of different colors from the stage lights, and musicians couldn't help but take notice. Suddenly drummers could be seen *through* the instrument that had formerly hidden eighty percent of their bodies. By the early '70s, Zickos was selling more than a thousand

Bonzo and his classic amber Vistalites

courtesy of Dr. Bruce Klauber

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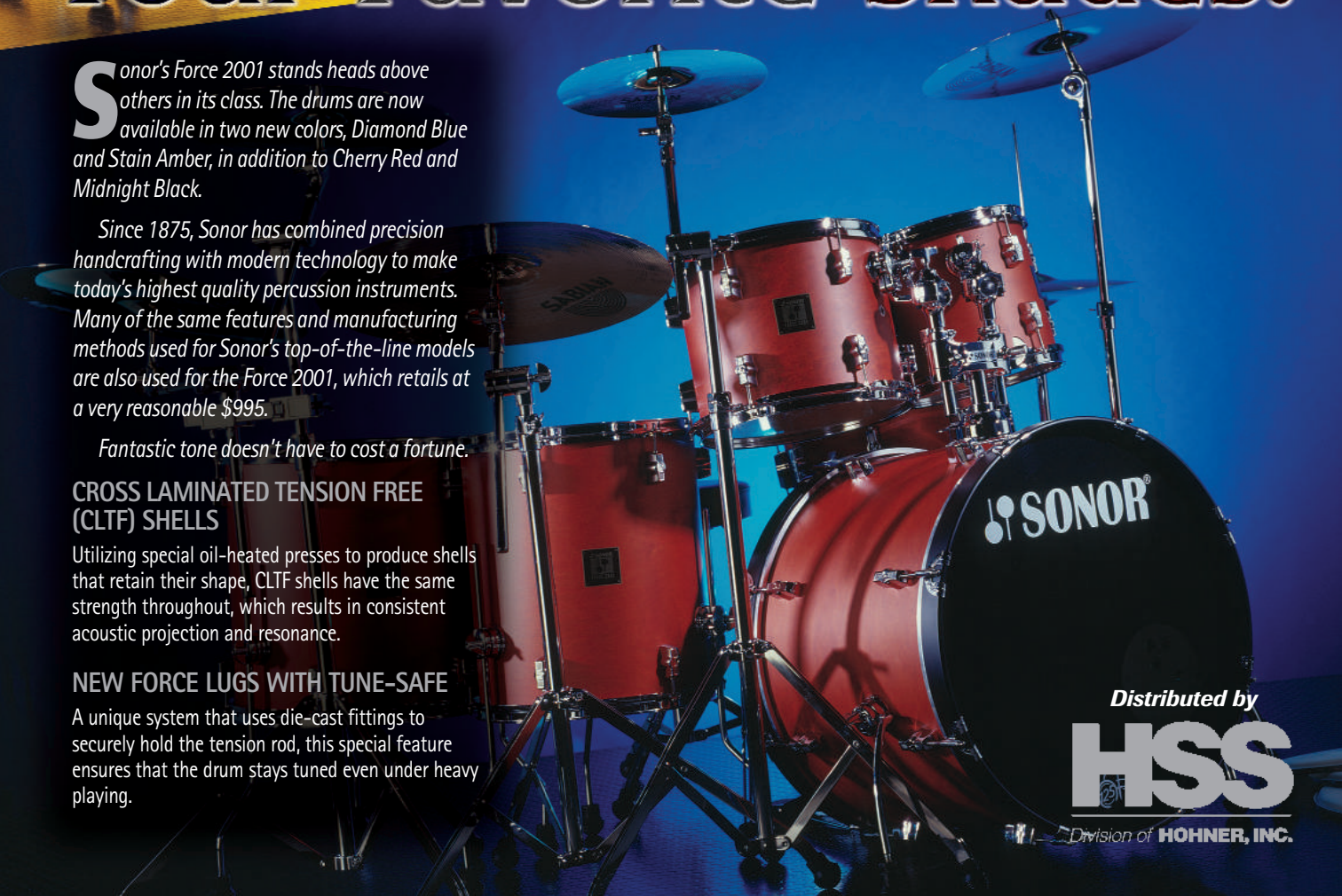

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Acrylic Drums

Plexiglass kits a year. But competitors soon emerged.

Drummer Bob Grauso and plastics specialist John Morena formed their company in upstate New York in 1966, combining the words "vibes" and "Fiberglass" (the material they favored) to come up with the name Fibes. C.F. Martin Guitars bought the company in 1970, and things really took off; among the more notable Crystalite players were Alan Dawson, Billy Cobham (who can be seen with a double-bass set on his *Spectrum* album), and the great Buddy Rich, who endorsed other brands but favored a Fibes SFT snare.

Then America's biggest drum manufacturer burst onto the scene. Ludwig didn't invent plastic drums, and many aficionados say the company didn't do them best. But "Vistalite" became synonymous with "clear drums" the way the brand name "Kleenex" has come to mean "tissues."

Vital gear: Cobham on Fibes circa 1972

Ludwig's primary innovation was cosmetic. When Vistalites debuted in late 1972, they were available in clear as well as five colors: in order of popularity, blue, amber, red, yellow, and green. (White, black, and an opaque "smoke" were added later, when green was dropped.) The drums were striking in appearance—the next step in flash and pizzazz after the sparkling psychedelic sets of the mid-'60s—but Ludwig

Clearly Pink: Nick Mason on his Fibes kit (with Ludwig mounts)

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Clear ahead: Ludwig, Fibes, and Zickos kits today

kept upping the ante. In 1975, it introduced multi-colored Rainbow Vistalites (drummers could choose up to three colors alternating in one of six striped patterns), and in 1978 came a set with built-in Tivoli lights similar to those on Christmas trees.

Some of the most famous drummers in the world endorsed Ludwig, and players such as Keith Moon, Max Roach, Carl Palmer, Nick Mason of Pink Floyd, Karen Carpenter, and Johnny Jackson of The Jackson Five could all be seen with Vistalite kits at various points in the '70s. But no one did more to popularize them than Bonham, who switched from a maple Big Beat set to Vistalites for Zeppelin's tours in 1973 and 1975.

Bonham played an amber kit in 14x26, 10x14, 16x16, and 16x18 sizes. (He usually stuck with an alloy snare.) "I remember those Vistalites with special affection," Zep bassist John Paul Jones says, though he underscores the oft-stated observation that it wasn't a particular instrument that gave Bonham his massive sound. "I saw Bonzo playing a tiny Ludwig kit that he had made for his son Jason when he was about five years old, and you still had to stand well back. Even *the cases* would sound good in his hands!"

Nevertheless, the association with one of rock's most powerful drummers sold many of the tens of thousands of Vistalite sets that Ludwig made in the '70s. But the drums also had their critics. Among the charges leveled at Ludwig were that Vistalites were fragile and could shatter if dropped on a seam, that they were often out of round, and that the bearing edges were uneven. Given the sheer number of sets produced, it was inevitable that a few "lemons" would find their way to the market. But that's all it takes to taint a product's reputation—just ask Ford about the Pinto of the same era—and Zickos and Fibes complain that Vistalites gave acrylic drums a bad name.

The other problem that contributed to acrylic's decline was global in scale. A key ingredient in plastic is petroleum. In 1972, the price of crude oil was about $3 a barrel; by the end of '74, it had quadrupled to $12 as a result of the Arab oil embargo employed after the Yom Kippur War. The impact to consumers was considerable.

As quickly as acrylic drums had boomed, the market disappeared. Bill Zickos left the company he founded in 1971 after a dispute with investors, and it closed in the mid-'70s. Martin sold Fibes in 1979, and the new owners, the Corder Drum Company, stopped making Crystalites. Ludwig ceased production of Vistalites that same year. Plastic drums went from clear to invisible almost overnight.

Acrylic Drums Return

In recent years, interest in vintage drums has exploded. Granted, when most players use the term, they're thinking about something like a fabled Radio King snare from the '40s. But many rockers in their late twenties to early thirties first gravitated toward the instrument while watching their heroes perform on see-through drums. It's only natural that they'd think fondly of these sets.

Lovingly restored vintage acrylic kits are now a common sight onstage and in the studio among players in underground genres such as stoner rock (Brant Bjork of Fu Manchu swears by his mid-'70s Vistalites), post rock (John McEntire of Tortoise bought an amber set in homage to Bonham), and alternative or punk (Weezer drummer Pat Wilson played blue Vistalites on a recent tour, and George Berz played a clear kit backing Dinosaur Jr.'s J. Mascis).

I scored my own mid-'70s amber Vistalites in the spring of 2001 for $750; a matching 5x14 snare set me back another $365. (I justified the expense to my wife by selling my ten-year-old cherry wood Yamaha Recording Customs—a sweet set, but I haven't missed them once.) I found my Vistas via the online auction site eBay, though I knew I was buying from reputable dealers; established shops such as Atlanta's Vintage Drums or Iowa's Vintage Drum Center can also help find whole acrylic sets or individual pieces.

My five-piece set was conventionally sized; an amber set in the Bonham con-

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figuration is the most sought-after item on the collector's market, along with green Vistalites and special-order Rainbow sets in Bicentennial red, white & blue or the colors of the Ethiopian flag (which was popular among reggae drummers). These rarer kits can sell for upwards of $2,000, sans snare and hardware.

The popularity of vintage acrylics has inspired the original manufacturers to return to the business. Bill Zickos and John Brazelton reopened their company in 1993, and a revitalized Fibes was launched by Austin, Texas drum shop owner Tommy Robertson in 1994. Both companies now make an array of high-quality clear drums to order in a variety of colors. Ludwig also reintroduced Vistalites last year, though in a limited capacity—a clear five-piece set is the only option in what the company's Jim Catalano calls an experiment to test demand. "I'm on the Net all the time," he says, "and all I ever hear is, 'If Ludwig only brought back the Vistalites, you guys would make a killing.' If the clear takes off and we get enough interest in the amber and the blue, then we'll start doing things like that."

A new acrylic kit from any of these manufacturers can cost in the neighborhood of $3,000—a steep tag that reflects the price of materials and manufacturing. Given that many people associate "plastic" with "machine-made," it's ironic that acrylic drums actually require more craftsmanship than wood drums. "It's different and more involved," says Fibes' Robertson, who personally makes both types of shells by hand. "It's a heavy investment, and it's always going to remain a niche market. There are specific drummers who will buy and play an acrylic set—I have not met a person who didn't love the way they sound—but some others will always go, 'I just can't see myself sitting behind those drums.'"

Of course, that unique look is part of the appeal, along with the distinctive sound. Since new acrylic drums reflect all of the improvements in manufacturing over the last thirty years—from better lugs and rims to higher-quality plastic shells—the classic, booming sound is stronger than ever. Looking to replace a rose-colored Fibes set that was stolen shortly before he joined Rainbow in 1980, Bobby Rondinelli recently purchased a new blue Crystalite kit to use with Blue Öyster Cult.

"Everybody that hears my kit freaks out," Rondinelli says. "I can't say enough good things about these drums. I think that as more people get exposed to them, the more you're gonna see guys using them again. And I think this time they'll stay for a while. I'm pretty much a purist. I love old stuff, and I'm a vintage snare snob. But good is good, and if something sounds better, plays nicer, is easier to tune, and is more consistent, I'm not stupid. I can use any drums I want. A lot of guys ask me, 'How could you go from your last kit to Fibes?' And I say, 'Just *listen* to them.'"

King Coffee of psychedelic rockers The Butthole Surfers first played a Zickos drum in the mid-'80s, when he performed standing up with a snare and an 18" bass as a floor tom. "I discovered that if you put a real cheap Radio Shack strobe light underneath a clear drum, it just lights up like a light bulb," he says. "We were really into stage theatrics, but we were also really low-rent as far as production, and for $20, that just looked incredible."

Now Coffee is playing a new clear Crystalite set. "I think they're better quality than the old Vistalites," he says. "They have a louder sound. There's something about the acrylic that just resonates all over, and if you hit hard, they sound extra booming. Plus I appreciate the whole ma-and-pa setup of Fibes. With the film projections we use now, clear is great because you can see the images through the drumset, and any lights you put through them just make them glow."

Despite their reputation for fragility, acrylic drums don't need to be treated differently from a quality wood set. "Protect your instrument; use cases and common sense," Robertson urges. "You're not gonna break the drums by playing them. It's the cartage—the handling—and that doesn't matter if they're acrylic, wood, or anything."

Clear drums do tend to show fingerprints. For cleaning, Robertson recommends a soft cotton cloth and Trick drum cleaner or Johnson Wax's Clean & Shine. My vintage Vistas came with a few minor scratches, and I added one nastier gouge while replacing a dented badge. Many auto supply stores carry a line of plastic polish called Novus 1-2-3, which performs miracles in buffing out nicks and making acrylic sparkle. This is in fact one of several useful tips I learned from Vista enthusiasts on the Net. A quick Web search will turn up a bounty of sites devoted to the drums' history and care.

Wary of the volume and assuming they'd be unduly "boomy," I initially outfitted my kit with Remo Pinstripes, though I soon learned from fellow acrylic drummers that I should have gone in the opposite direction, and the sets sound best with thinner heads.

"Acrylic drums are everything you'd think they wouldn't be," Rondinelli says. "They're less ringy, more focused, real present, and quick. There are not a whole lot of harmonics you're dealing with, and the volume's all up in the drum. It's not like you really have to hit them super-hard, because you'll have a lot of ambient volume onstage anyway. If your guitarist has an amp that goes to eleven, well, now you can hold your own."

At the end of *The Graduate*, Benjamin Braddock opted for true love rather than a future in plastics. But then he didn't play drums in a rock band. If he did, he could have had both at the same time.

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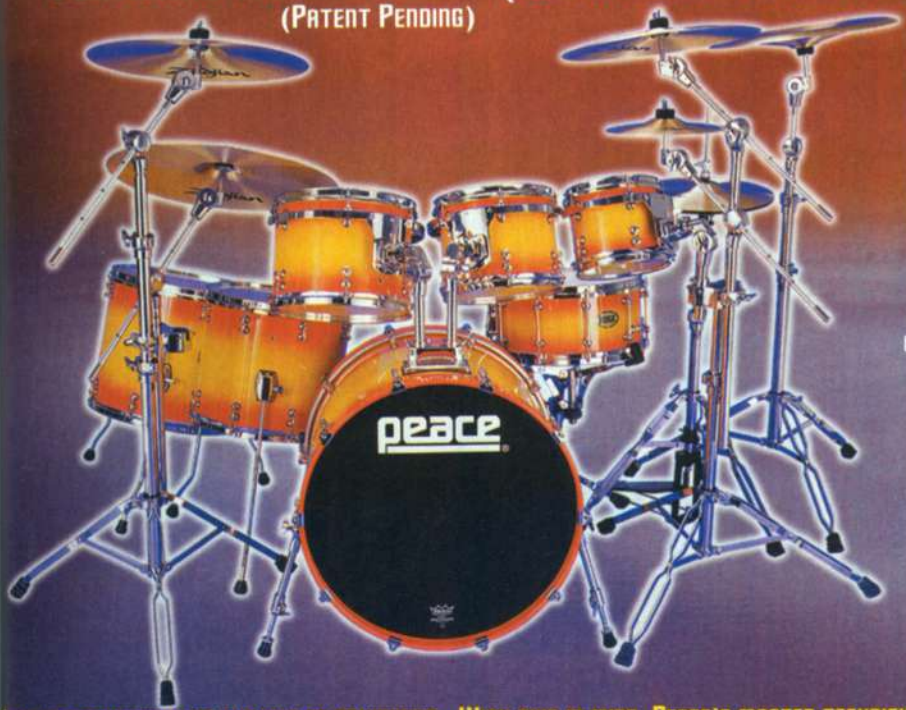

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Mirror-Image Exercises

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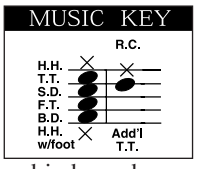
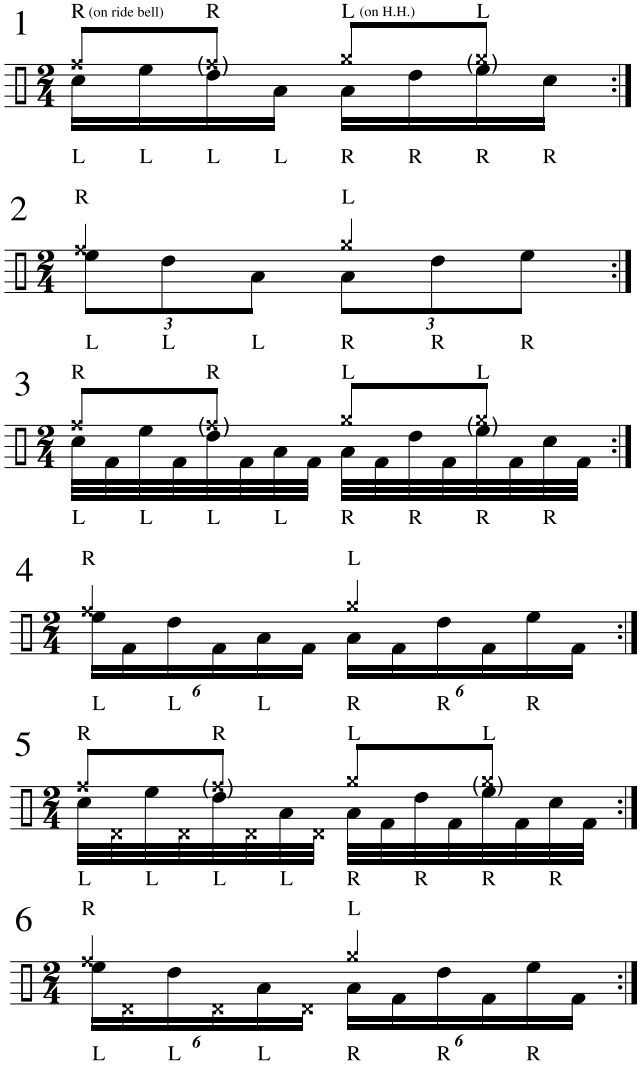
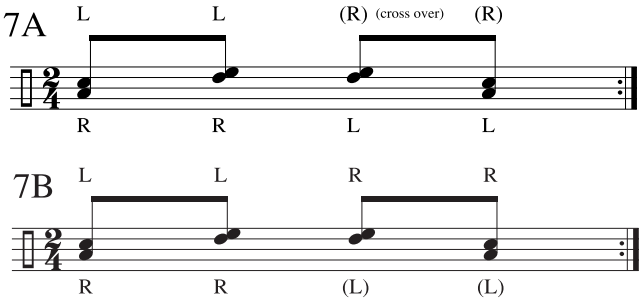


The following examples consist of "mirror image" exercises. That is, one hand or pattern moves around the kit in a clockwise motion and the other moves counter-clockwise. In addition to improving coordination and independence, these exercises will strengthen the weaker side of your body.

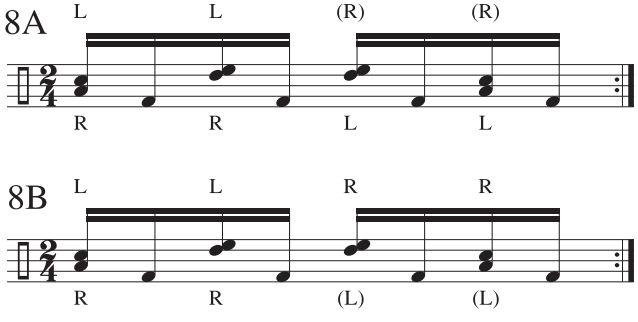
In examples 1–6, one hand plays a ride pattern for one beat (quarter note) while the other hand (and/or foot) moves around the drums. On the second beat (quarter note) the hands reverse, with the left hand playing the ride pattern and the right hand moving around the drums. The parentheses around the ride cymbal and hi-hat in examples 1, 3, and 5 suggest playing these exercises several times through, first with a quarter-note ride pattern and then with an 8th-note ride pattern.



Examples 7–10 have the hands going in opposite directions simultaneously. Imagine drawing a circle, with each hand/arm moving out-around-in. The right hand moves counter-clockwise, beginning on the floor tom, while the left hand moves clockwise, beginning on the snare. In example 7A, the right hand crosses over on 2 and the "&" of 2. (The crossover is indicated with parentheses around the sticking.) In example 7B, the left hand does the crossing over. Once you're comfortable with these, see if you can alternate between example 7A and 7B so that with each pass the opposite hand is crossing over. This can be quite challenging at first.



Examples 8A and 8B alternate the bass drum with the hands.



Examples 9A and 9B are identical to examples 7A and 7B, except that the hands are played as alternating RLRL single strokes as opposed to flat flams.

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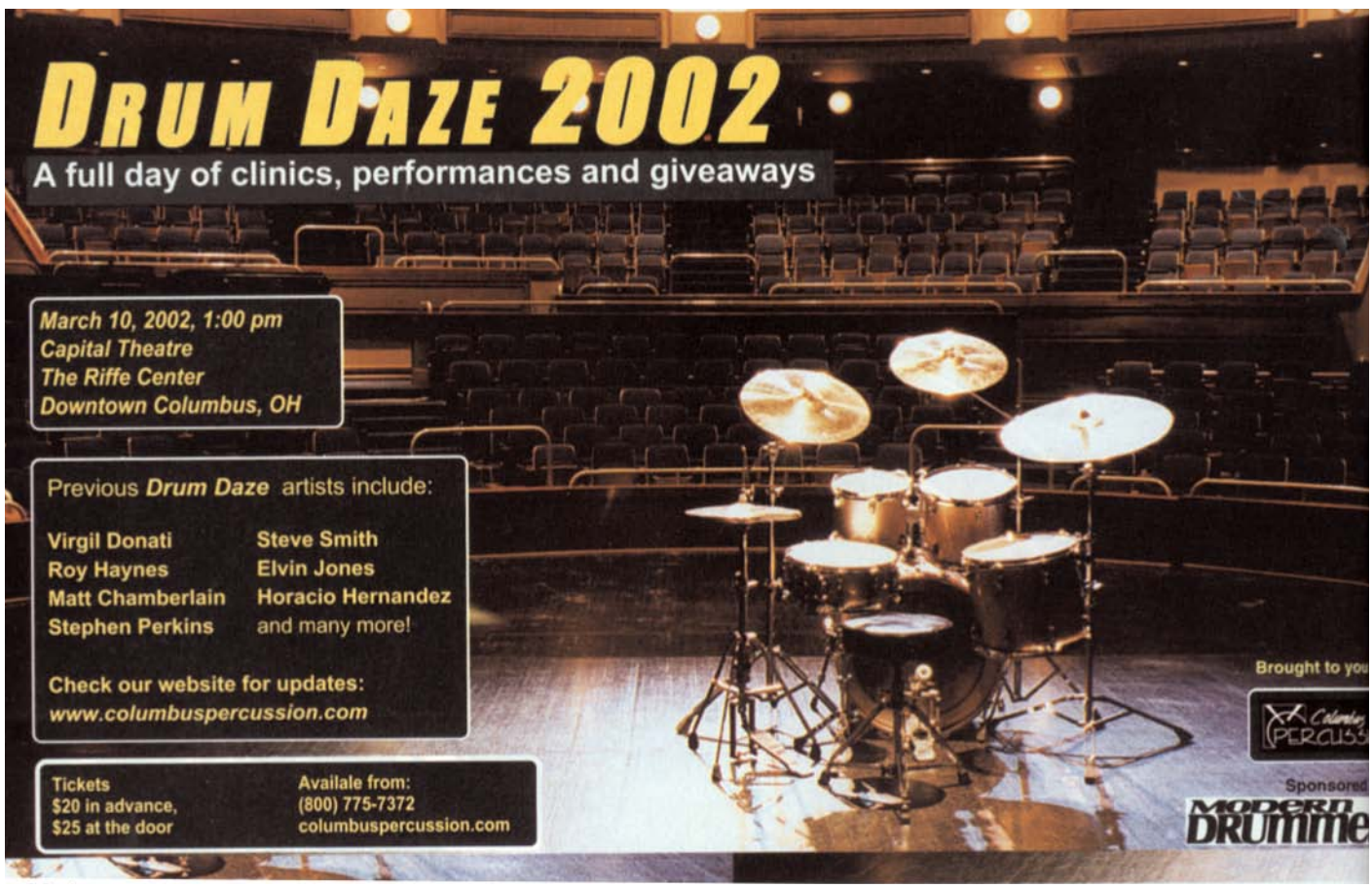
Examples 10A and 10B add the bass drum to create a 16th-note-triplet figure.

Initially these exercises may be awkward and challenging, as they are somewhat different from the norm. But, as with all new drumming challenges, take things slowly at first, and then gradually increase the tempo. To be continued….

Visit Rod at www.rodmorgenstein.com.



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Understanding The Language Of Music

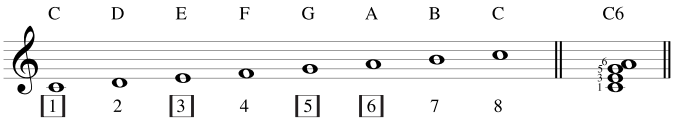
Part 7: 6th And 7th Chords

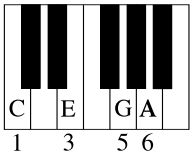
by Ron Spagnardi

Over the past several months we've discussed triads and their inversions. This month we'll look at *adding* more notes to our basic triad, starting with 6th chords.

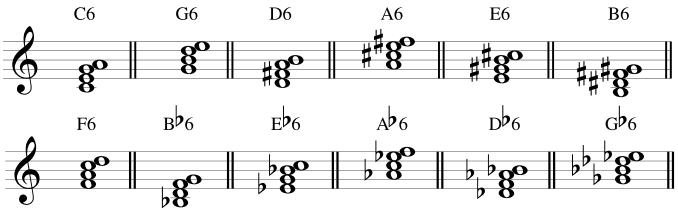
6th Chords

Triads with the addition of the 6th degree of the scale to the chord are called 6th chords. Look at the C major scale below. When we add the 6th degree of the scale to the triad, we create a C6 chord (1-3-5-6).



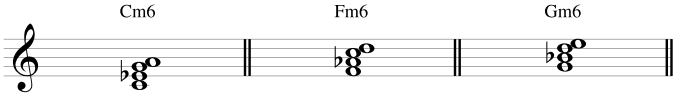


Here are the major 6th chords in every key. Try them all on your keyboard.



Minor 6th Chords

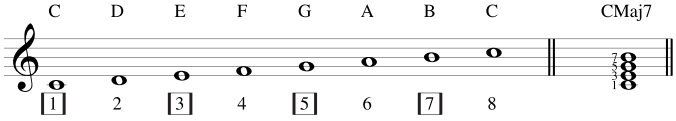
Like three-note triads, 6th chords can also be minor (1-♭3-5-6). By lowering the 3rd by one half step, and adding the 6th, we now have a minor 6th chord. See the examples of Cm6, Fm6, and Gm6 chords below.

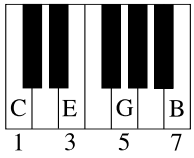


Major 7ths

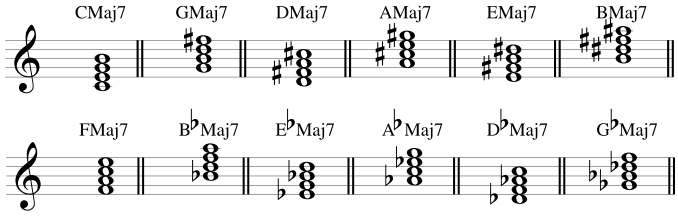
Major 7th chords consist of the basic triad (root, 3rd, and 5th) with the addition of the 7th degree of the scale (1-3-5-7). Look at the following example. Notice that B is the 7th degree of the C major scale. When we add the 7th (B) to the triad, we create a CMajor7th chord.

The symbol for a Major 7th chord can be CMaj7, CM7, or C△7.



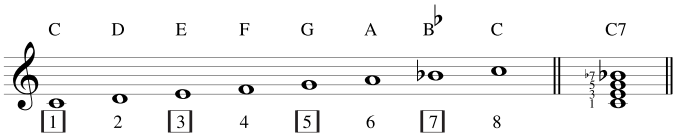


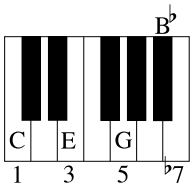
Here are the Major 7th chords in all twelve keys.



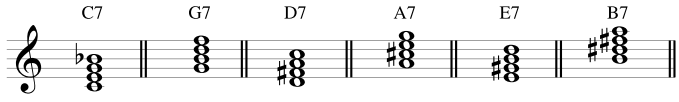
Dominant 7ths

A Dominant 7th chord also consists of a major triad (root, 3rd, and 5th), but the 7th degree of the scale is lowered by one half step (1-3-5-♭7). Notice in the example below that B♭ is the lowered 7th of the C scale. The addition of B♭ to our major triad gives us a C Dominant 7th chord. The sign for a C Dominant 7th chord is simply C7.





The following example shows the Dominant 7th chords in all twelve keys.



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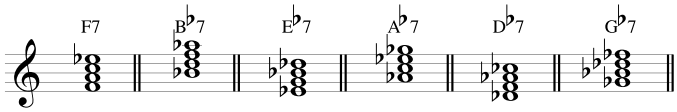
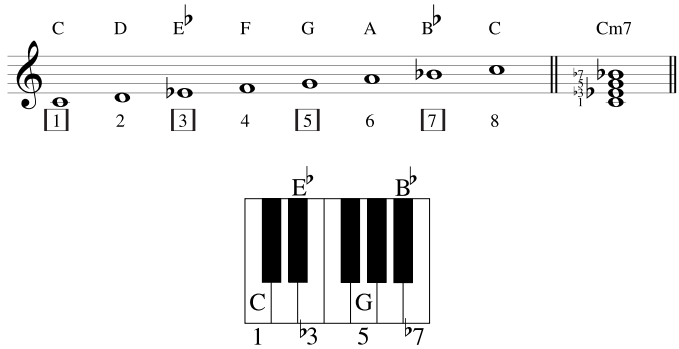


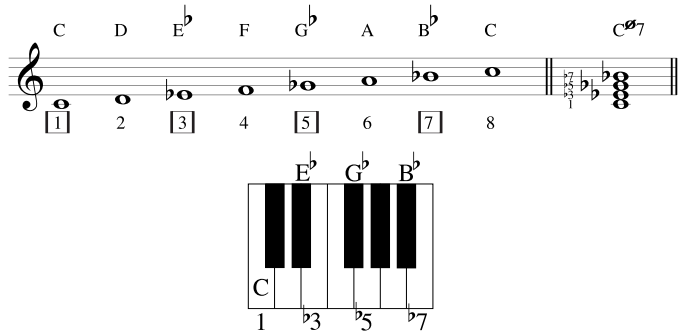
Minor 7ths

A minor 7th chord is simply a minor triad (root, ♭3, 5), with the addition of the lowered 7th degree (1-♭3-5-♭7). Minor 7th chords can be written as Cmin7, Cm7, or C-7. Try to find all the minor 7th chords on your keyboard.



Half-Diminished 7ths

Still another 7th chord alteration is the Half-Diminished 7th. This chord consists of a diminished triad (root,♭3,♭5), with the lowered 7th added (1-♭3♭5♭7). The symbol for a half-diminished 7th can be C⌀7, Cm7♭5, or C-7♭5.

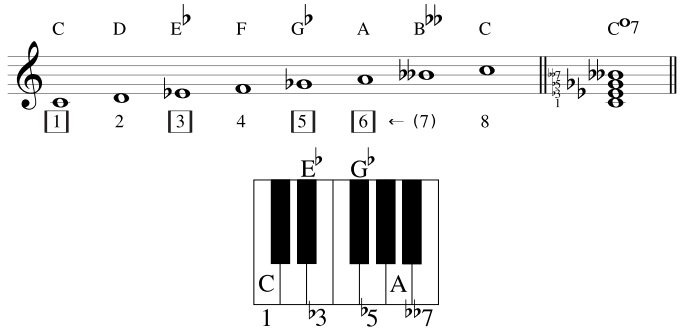


Full-Diminished 7ths

The last alteration on our 7th chord is called full-diminished. The full-diminished chord is also made up of a diminished triad (root,♭3,♭5). However, the 7th degree is now lowered by one whole step (1-♭3-♭5-♭♭7). In terms of traditional music theory, the 7th degree is flatted twice and referred to as B♭♭ (double flat).

A much easier way to locate the note is to realize that the full-diminished 7th is the *same* as the 6th. Notice in the example below that in the key of C, the full-diminished 7th (B♭♭) is actually an A, and A is the 6th degree of the scale.

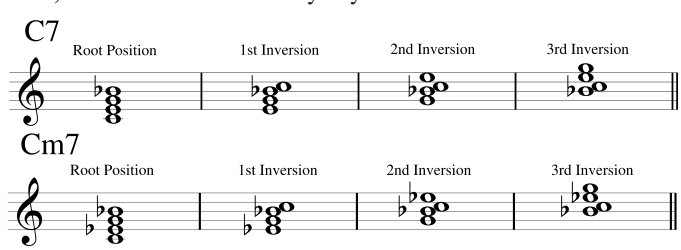
The symbol for a full-diminished chord is C°7, or Cdim7. Try to locate all of the full-diminished 7th chords on your keyboard.



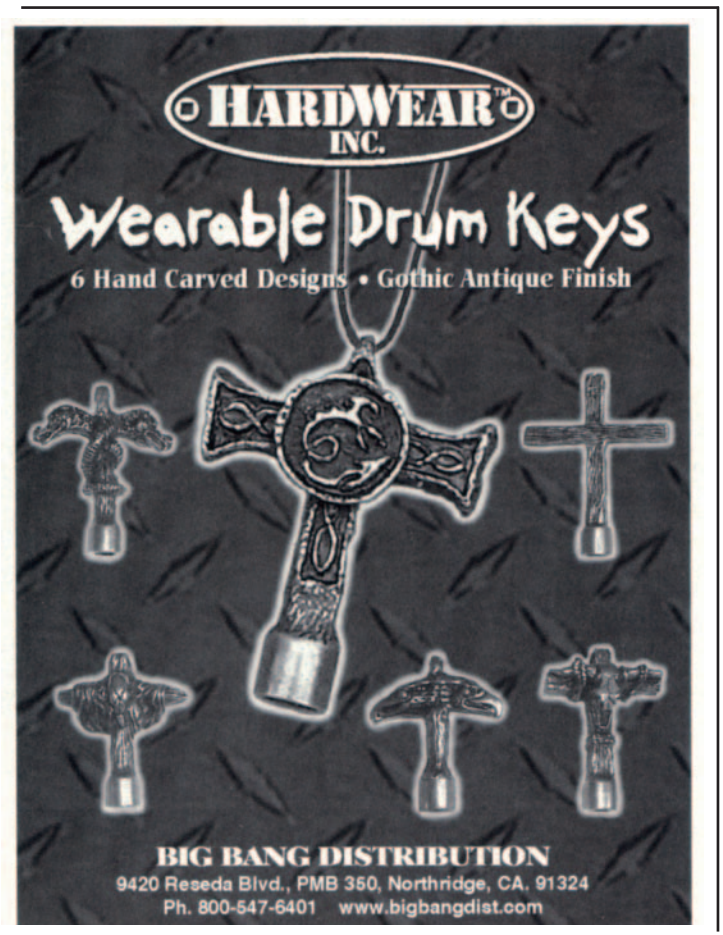
7th Chord Inversions

As with triads, 7th chords can *also* be played in inversions. However, 7th chords will have four positions since there are four notes in the chord: root position, 1st inversion, 2nd inversion, and 3rd inversion (7th on the bottom). The following example shows a C7 and a Cm7 chord in root position, 1st inversion, 2nd inversion, and 3rd inversion.

For added practice this month, experiment with all the 7th chords (major, dominant, minor, half-diminished, and full-diminished) in all inversions in every key.



There's quite a bit to absorb in this installment, so take your time and practice daily. Next month we'll look at musical form and structure and why it's essential for drummers to fully understand this important subject.



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The Stripped-Down Kit Approach

by Ron Spagnardi

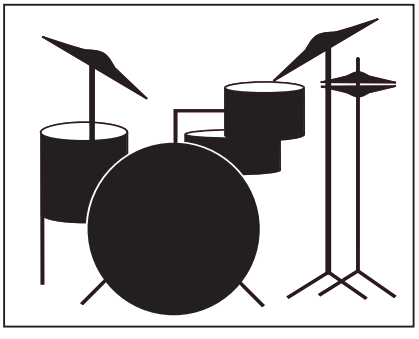
Many years ago, as a young student at Berklee, I was called to sub on a three-night gig with a jazz trio at a hotel lounge in Boston. After arriving with a basic four-piece jazz kit, I was quickly informed by the bass player/leader that the small bandstand situated in the middle of the bar would not accommodate a full set of drums. I was told, in no uncertain terms, that I was to play the gig with just snare drum, hi-hat, and brushes—and do it standing up! (There wasn't even room for a drum throne.)

Difficult as it was, I managed to get through each night, ultimately pleasing both my bandmates. More importantly, I learned a lot that weekend. First, when you're called to do a job, you do what you have to do regardless of the circumstances. In this case, it was having to make a jazz trio swing for three nights with a *very* limited amount of gear—a situation I'd never had to face before. Secondly, it started me thinking about a method of solo practice that I would continue to use for years afterwards, a method I call the "stripped-down kit approach."

The Premise

Having a lot of drums and cymbals at your disposal tends to make you think more in terms of *tonal variations* and *color*, as opposed to *rhythmic creativity* and *inventiveness*. The more gear you have, the more likely you are to focus on sounds and tones, rather than on creating interest purely from a rhythmic standpoint. Having less gear literally forces you to be more creative, simply because you don't have the tonal variations of numerous drums and cymbals to rely on. It's kind of a "less is more" approach related to equipment. With that in mind, here's how to make it work.

The Program



Step 1:

a) Using a standard four-piece kit (four drums, two cymbals, and hi-hat), practice trading four-bar solos with an imaginary soloist (four bars of time followed by four bars of solo).

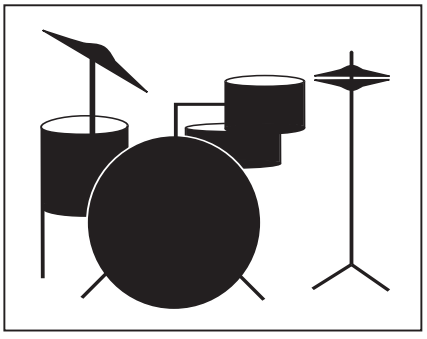
b) Do the same thing trading eight-bar phrases.

c) Pick a tempo and play twelve bars of time, followed by a twelve-bar solo chorus. Try playing three or four solo choruses.

d) Pick a tempo and play sixteen bars of time followed by a thirty-two-bar solo.

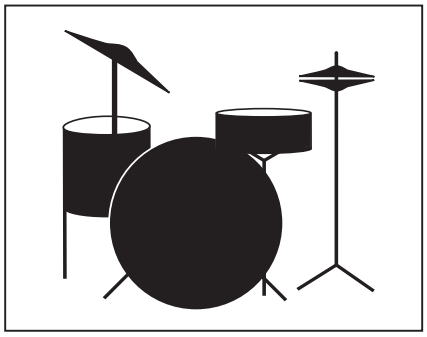
Practice the routine outlined above until you feel comfortable and confident about your playing. Then, follow the next steps, in sequence.

Step 2: Remove the crash cymbal.



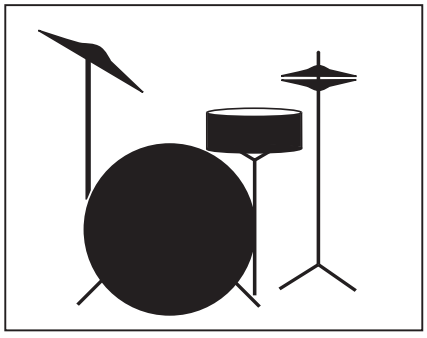
Follow the exact same procedure described in Step 1, but first *remove the left-side crash cymbal* from the kit. All cymbal usage is now restricted to just ride cymbal and hi-hat.

Step 3: Remove the rack tom.



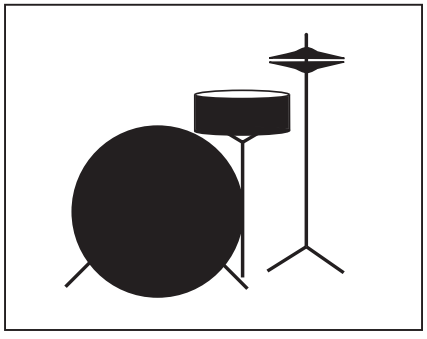
Chances are you'll soon become aware of how often you rely on that small tom strictly for tonal variation rather than rhythmic diversity. Now that the drum is no longer there, you need to think a little harder about every note you play.

Step 4: Remove the floor tom.



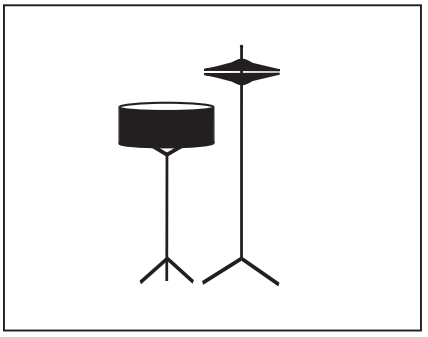
With no toms at all left to work with, you're forced to structure patterns and explore rhythmic possibilities between just snare, bass, ride cymbal, and hi-hat. You should begin to notice at this point how difficult it can be to structure a meaningful thirty-two-bar solo with the limited amount of gear at your disposal.

Step 5: Remove the ride cymbal.



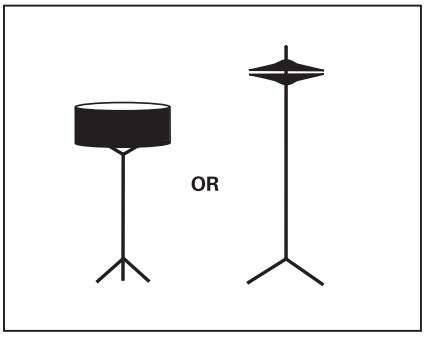
Rhythmic inventiveness between snare and bass drum becomes increasingly more important once the ride cymbal is removed. Tape-record these sessions and take note of how often you're repeating yourself.

Step 6: Remove the bass drum.



This one is *really* tough! Left with only snare drum and hi-hat, your rhythmic creativity is truly put to the test. You may start to notice that those thirty-two-bar solo choruses are even harder to get through without being repetitious.

Step 7: Remove the snare drum or hi-hat.



You could end the program with Step 6 . However, for the really daring, step 7 is the moment of truth. Select either *just* the snare drum or *just* the hi-hat, and see what you can come up with. Be patient with yourself, as this can be extremely difficult.

The Outcome

It's been said that John Coltrane would practice soloing on just one mode of a scale for eleven hours straight in an effort to explore and ultimately *exhaust* all the possibilities. In a sense, this program offers the same kind of creative musical discipline.

As you work your way through, you may find yourself playing rhythmic patterns you never thought of before. You may begin to structure your solos in a totally different way by developing motifs and rhythmic fragments, through the use of the call-and-response technique, and by employing shading and dynamics or tension & release. With the majority of the kit gone by the end, there's nowhere left to go but into the deepest regions of your creativity. And if you're still being highly creative by Steps 6 or 7, just imagine how fresh and inventive your playing will be when you return to the full kit! Good luck.

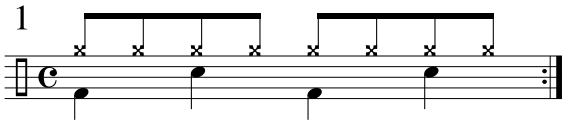
Undertow

A Good Mechanism For Your Time

by Billy Ward

I'd like to share some thoughts on "undertow," the contrasting rhythms that can help us play better. This is the stuff that nobody talks about. Most drummers probably don't even *think* about it. But we should. Here are some exercises designed to tune and polish our "inner gears."

Let's start with what most would say is the simplest rock beat.

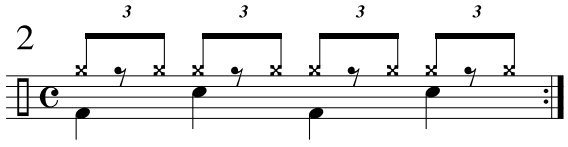


Play this sucker at a medium tempo. (If you have a metronome, set it at quarter note = 120 for a reference tempo.) This could be a drum track for Steely Dan's "Hey Nineteen," The Doobie Brothers' "Takin' It To The Streets," or (you fill in the blank). It's one of the easiest beats, and it's one of the most common in popular music. But it's also a cool beat!

How can we make this beat feel great? With undertow. To get started, while playing this beat, set your "inner gears" at 8th notes. This is the easy, "default setting" for most drummers' inner clocks because it follows the fast limb—in this case, your dominant hand playing the hi-hat.

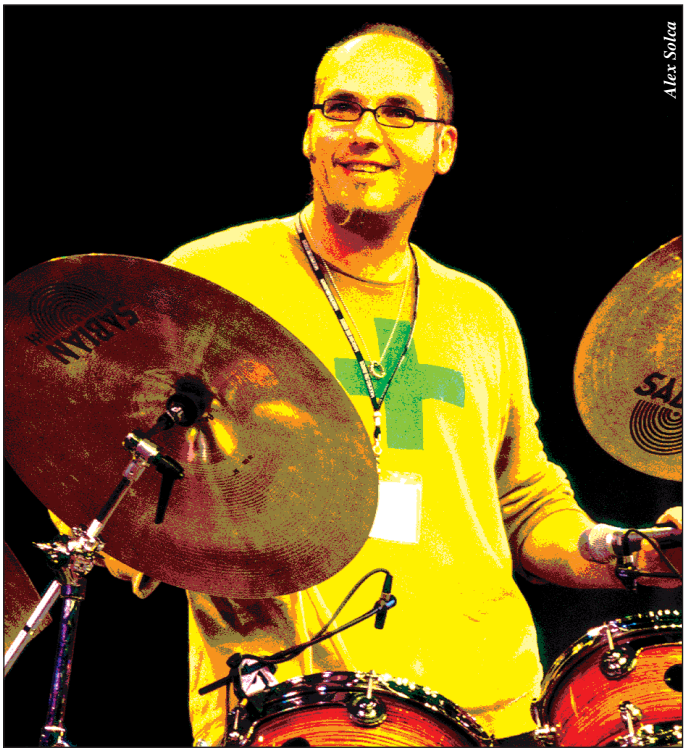
Now play the same beat, but inside feel a 16th-note undertow. Don't *play* the 16ths, just feel 'em. It's the exact same beat, we're simply changing the undertow we're feeling inside. You'll notice subtle things start to happen to the groove when you do this. For me, the hi-hat accents automatically change. It almost feels more like a U2 track—or something heavier, like some grunge feels.

Let's try this same concept with a shuffle rhythm. Start with the following simple shuffle.

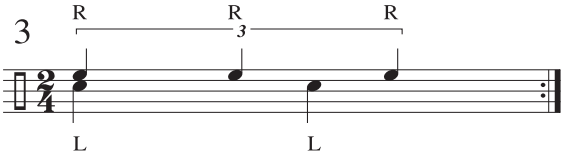


This beat reminds me of John Lennon's "Instant Karma." Now go back to it, but inside feel an 8th-note-triplet undertow. Check out how naturally important each downbeat becomes with that triplet undertow.

Apparently some younger drummers have trouble feeling triplet undertow. What's up with all of you guys who aren't as comfy with triplets as you are with duple rhythms? It seems that the least comfortable undertow (and groove) is triplet-based. Admittedly, there are a lot fewer songs these days with shuffle or swing feels. But, believe me, triplets are cool.


Alex Solca

Triplet-based grooves are much more fun than duple rhythms like 8ths and 16ths. Yes, they're a bit harder. Sticking, for one thing, gets confusing. And when you build more rhythms on top of triplets, it quickly becomes more complicated. But let's take a look at this. Can you play "3 over 2"?



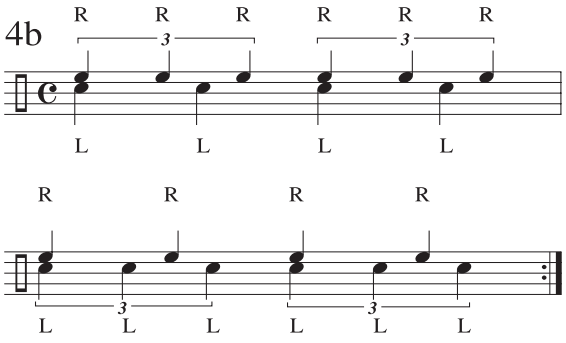
There are many different ways to learn to play 3 over 2. The obvious way is to slow it down, start with one hand, and then have that hand continue on "auto-pilot" while you add the second hand. Another way to look at it, though, is to see it from a "birds-eye view," as if it's one thing.

Classical drummers will, when sightreading, frequently lead with their strong (let's say right) hands. (Lefties, just reverse what I'm saying here; I know, you're used to it!) So read the following pattern and play it leading with your right hand on all downbeats.

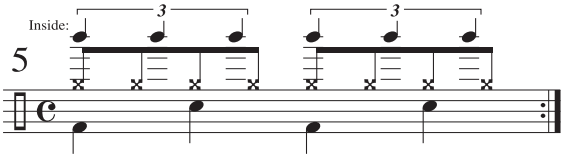
"Inside our guts are wheels and gears that could be helping us with our timing—or they can lie dormant. I say get out the WD-40, grease 'em up, and turn 'em loose!"

Now add the left on each downbeat as well, in unison with your right hand.

Now move your left hand to a different ashtray or whatever you're near so it has a different sound from your right. You're now playing 3 against 2. Try reversing this pattern and making it 2 against 3. How about alternating the sticking?



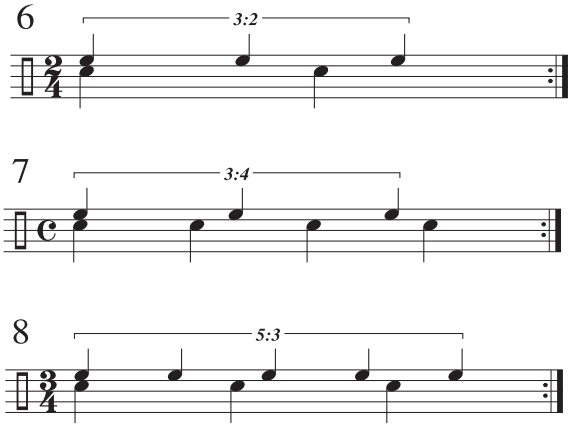
Can you play this on your leg? Can you *sing* it? If so, go back to example 1 (the even 8th-note pattern) and add a triplet undertow inside the 8th-note pattern. If you're doing this, notice how the downbeats feel differently and how you feel more confident on each quarter note. Why? Because there are more details happening before each quarter note passes.



When I'm in trouble with my time in the studio or on a bandstand, I'll try a more complex undertow to help lock me into the groove. I feel a greater "lock" with the tempo doing this. I have absolutely no idea if other drummers do this, but this works for me. If your singer bumps into your ride cymbal, and the guitar player rushes like crazy, if you use undertow you're *still* going to be able to "hold down the fort."

Please spend some time playing grooves and not concerning yourself with more notes, faster tempos, and better fills. Instead play a beat and keep playing it. Go inside yourself and see what's going on. What's your undertow? Can you change it freely to other types of subdivisions in time? Can you have a multiple, complex undertow going while you're playing? Inside our guts are wheels and gears that could be helping us with our timing—or they can lie dormant. I say get out the WD-40, grease 'em up, and turn 'em loose!

I think it's crucial for all of us drummers to be able to comfortably swim in not only 8th-note and 16th-note undertows, but all kinds of triplet undertows. Even when I'm playing a simple 8th-note groove, I've got some triplet wheels turning inside as well. I'm truly comfy with tapping and feeling "3 over 2," "3 over 4," and even "5 over 3."



These more odd subdivisions will probably only show themselves in things like little press rolls that I might play on the snare as a small detail to the large groove, but it's in there somewhere. If I'm not playing it with my hands, it's at least inside my stomach as part of my undertow.

There's more to this. The undertow is easier to find (and less important to solely rely upon) when the tempo happens to be near the pace of our heartbeat. But when the tempo is either extremely slow or fast, we really need the undertow and all those little gears inside.

Think about it: When you're playing a really slow beat, don't you add more subdivisions until the groove is ticking away near your heartbeat? Go back to example 1 and play it at an incredibly slow tempo. Get it to groove with confidence. I'd bet the farm that you're feeling 16ths under this tempo.

Let's say the chorus goes to a quarter-note feel on the bell of the ride. If you're accomplished at playing, singing, and feeling 3 over 2, add a triplet undertow inside while playing those quarter notes on the bell. This should make you feel *really* locked into the tempo and groove. Interesting stuff, huh?

How about playing quick tempos? Play example 1 at some ridiculously fast tempo. Getting tired? Hard to keep up with confidence? Undertow can help with this too. Let's learn how to apply undertow to this by first making the pattern a half-time groove.

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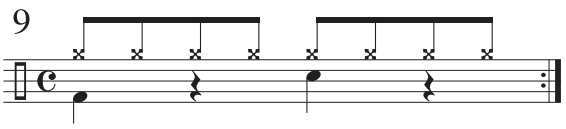

Now it's somehow a bit easier to play, because we're feeling our undertow more slowly. Here's the cool part: Go back to example 1 at the same, ridiculously fast tempo, but feel it in half-time. It's easier to play. Now how about feeling it in *double* half-time, twice as slow? Some jazz musicians I know call this feeling in "big time." This is how they feel those extremely fast tempos. They're only feeling each downbeat as the measures go racing by. Get it? Maybe if we remember this concept of big time, we'll play those fast tempos better.

I realize I've fished around a bit in trying to explain some of these time concepts, but I'm hoping this leads to some thought and study on your part. Maybe you'll eventually experience an improvement in your playing with your band or with a click track. (I hate seeing so many drummers intimidated by click tracks!) Click tracks, rhythmic undertows, and other mechanisms can enable us to play with more confidence and accuracy. But even more importantly, they'll give us piece of mind. Good luck.

Billy Ward is a successful session and touring drummer who has worked with Carly Simon, Robbie Robertson, Richard Marx, Ace Frehley, John Patitucci, Bill Champlin, and Joan Osborne. Billy can be reached at his Web site, www.billyward.com.

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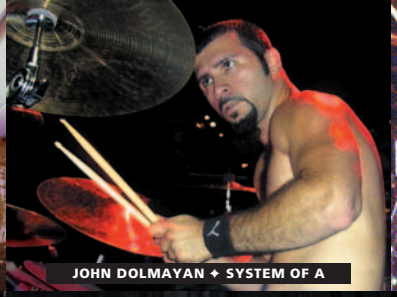
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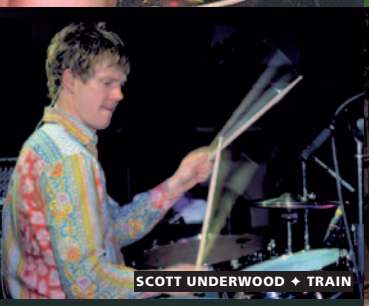
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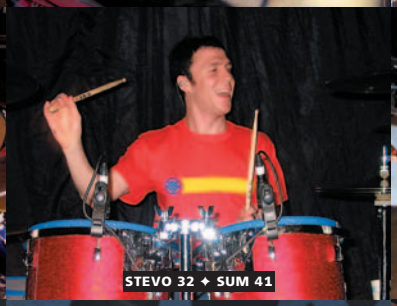
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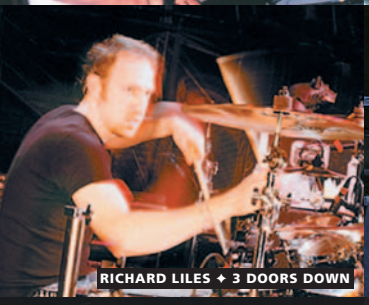
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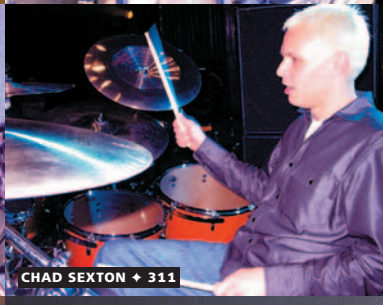
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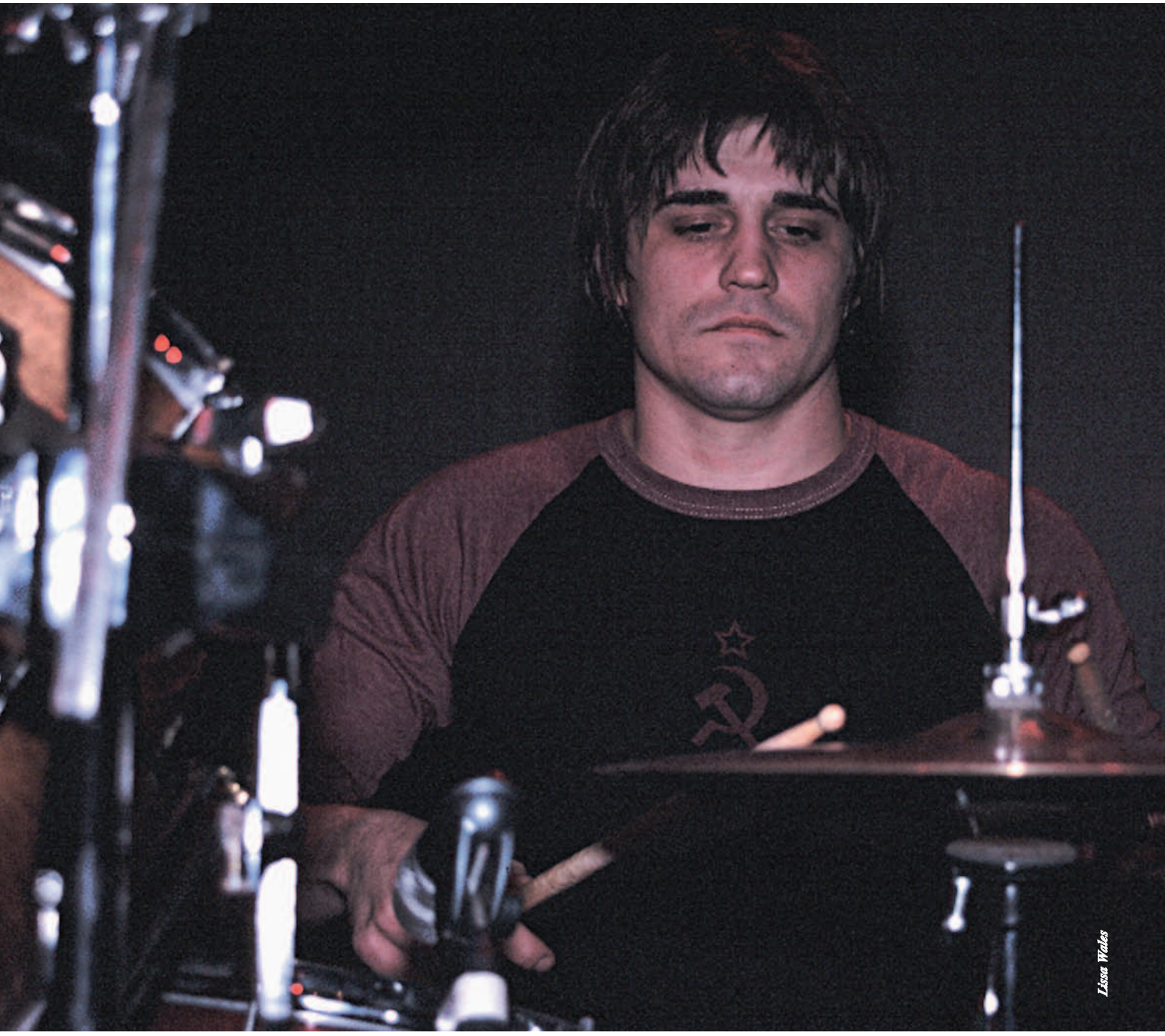
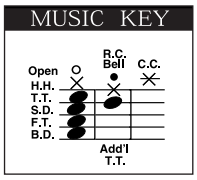
Puddle Of Mudd's

Greg Upchurch

Come Clean

by Ed Breckenfeld





Puddle Of Mudd is off to a roaring start, with *Come Clean* setting a record for the highest debut on the charts by a new band. The singles "Control" and "Blurry" have generated tons of radio/video play for this Kansas City–based quartet. Mudd's backbeat is provided by ex-Eleven drummer Greg Upchurch, who knows his way around alt/metal drumming.

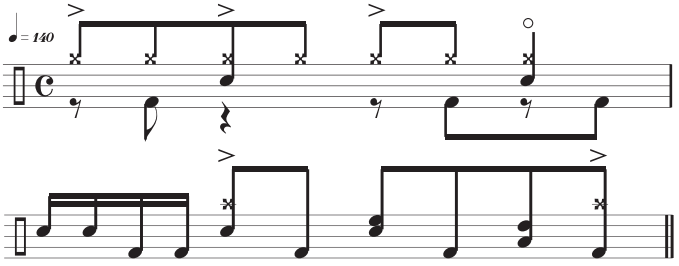
"Control"

As Wes Scantlin screams, "I…can't control you!" in this song's chorus, Greg lays the groove down under a wash of ride cymbal.

This terrific sequence drives the band's first single to its climax. Note the bass drum at the very end of the first measure setting up the snare crash in the second measure.

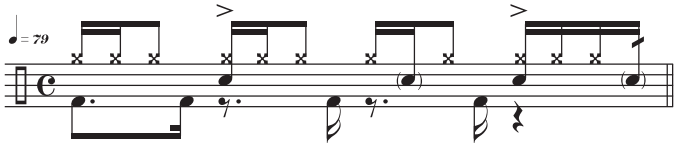
"Out Of My Head"

Here Greg ties his beat and fill together with bass drum offbeats in both patterns.



"Blurry"

This funk beat sets a strong pocket for the guitar harmonics of this tune's intro.

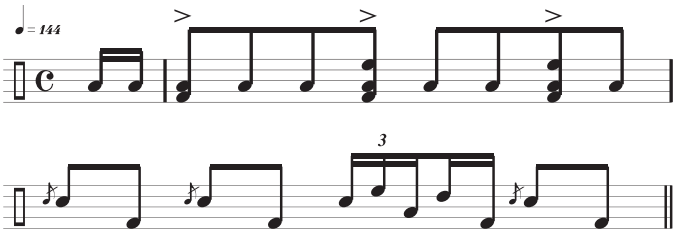


"Bring Me Down"

Here's a great chorus set-up, with bass drum once again playing an important role.

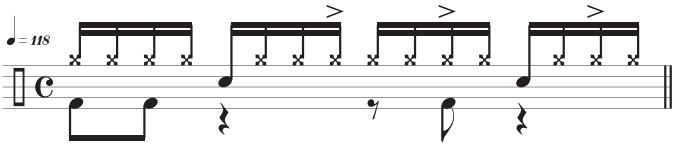
"Basement"

This song's pounding tom intro ends with a flashy triplet fill.



"Said"

The accents on the hi-hat *make* this groove. (Play the pattern without accents and you'll see what I mean.)



Mudd switches to half-time for the song's chorus, with Greg pulling out the heavy funk.

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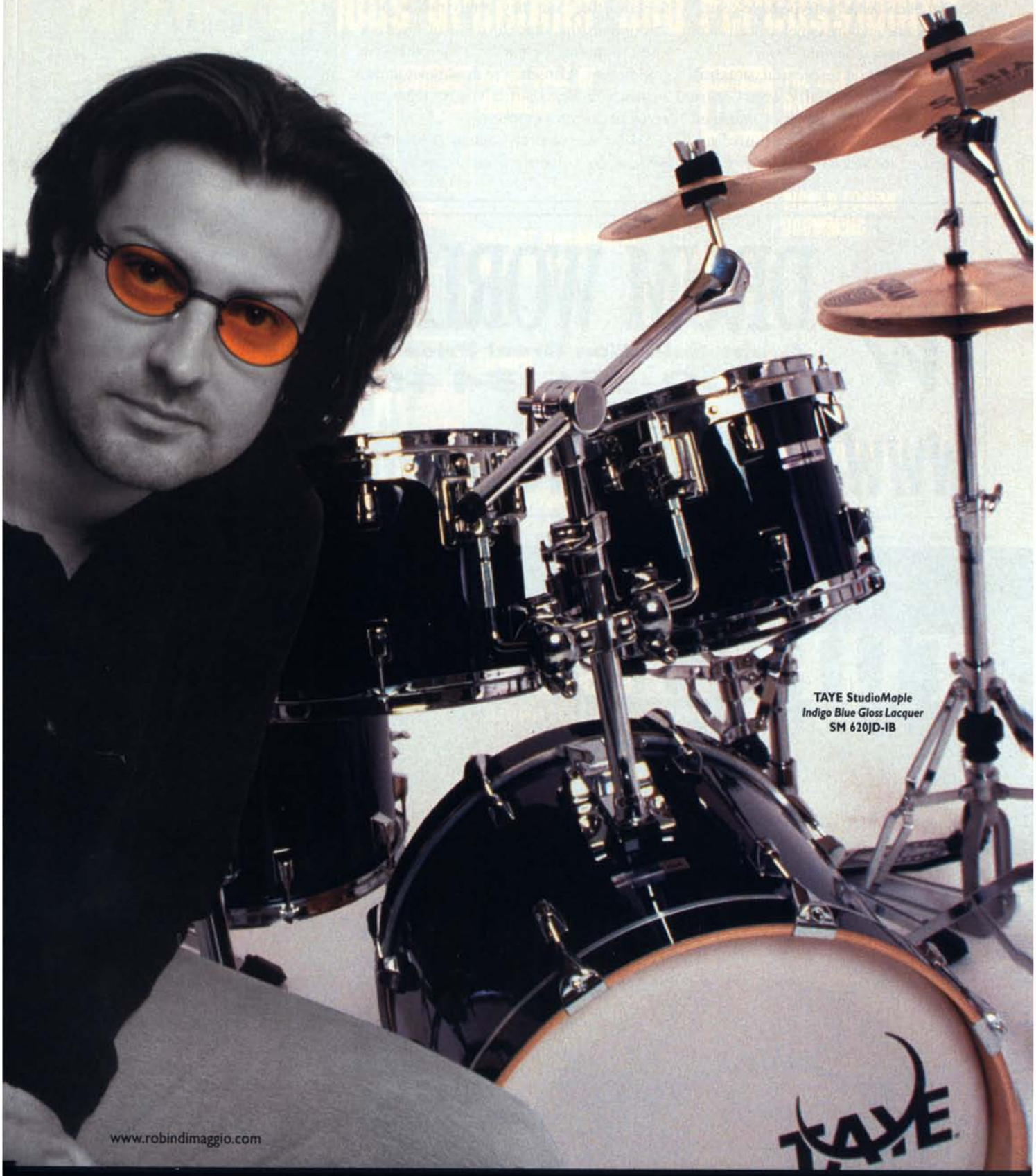

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The Distance Factor

Projecting The Right Sound To Your Audience

by Ron Hefner

I'm not an acoustical engineer. But after playing professionally for about three decades, I've figured out that, more often than not, the sound heard from behind a drumset is nowhere near the sound that's projected out to the audience. This difference in acoustic perception is what I call "the distance factor."

How can a drummer hear what the audience is actually hearing? One way is to put some real distance between you and the drums. Get someone else to play the set so you can walk around the room and hear the drums from another perspective. You'll be amazed at the difference in sound.

No matter where he played, Buddy Rich always considered how his drums sounded to the audience, not just to himself.

Of course, it's not always possible to listen to one's drums from out front. Drummers, therefore, need to develop an awareness of basic acoustic principles to help them deal with the distance factor. This, in turn, will help them create the best possible sound under any circumstances. (The following examples are intended for drummers who are not normally miked. Miking presents another set of acoustical dilemmas.)

The basic rule of thumb is this: A "ringy" room with high ceilings, lots of glass, and hard floors and walls requires a dry drum sound. A "dead" room with low ceilings and lots of carpeting, drapes, or other acoustic dampening can tolerate a more open sound. Now let's discuss the choices you'll need to make when it comes to performing in these very different environments.

From The Bottom Up

I recently played a jazz gig in a medium-sized club with hardwood floors and ceilings. The band was set up in a small, uncarpeted alcove, with a large picture window behind us. Knowing that the wooden floor would cause the drums to sound a bit too bright (and would also cause my bass drum to slide), I put down a rug.

After setting up the drums, I played the first set. Everything sounded pretty normal to me. But during the second set, another drummer sat in. I listened to the band from about twenty feet away at the bar, and I got a lesson in acoustics. My bass drum, which from behind the set sounded compact with a pleasant amount of resonance, sounded like a marching drum from out front! It was booming so badly, it blotted out the bass player's notes!

I solved the problem by borrowing a canvas bag from one of the other musicians and propping it against the front head. Presto! It now sounded perfect from out front. Of course, from behind the set it sounded awful—about as resonant as a pillow.

Why the big difference in sound from behind the set versus in front of it? It was mainly the glass window directly behind the drums, combined with the fact that the small wooden alcove we were set up in acted as an amplifier, capturing the sound and throwing it out into the room.

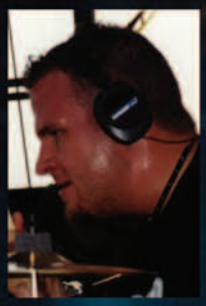
The Appropriate Snare Sound

I've also learned a lot about the sound of my snare drum by getting some distance from it. Drummers naturally tune a snare drum so it's pleasing to their ears. Unfortunately, that sound can be anything *but* pleasing to the ears of others.

Case in point: I heard a drummer recently in a fairly large room without too much acoustical dampening. He was going for a New Orleans-type fatback sound. He had the heads tuned medium-slack, and the snares were rather loose to get a sloshy effect.

Paul Doucette
Matchbox 20

Frank Briggs
Author - clinician



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Session artist & clinician

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Clinician

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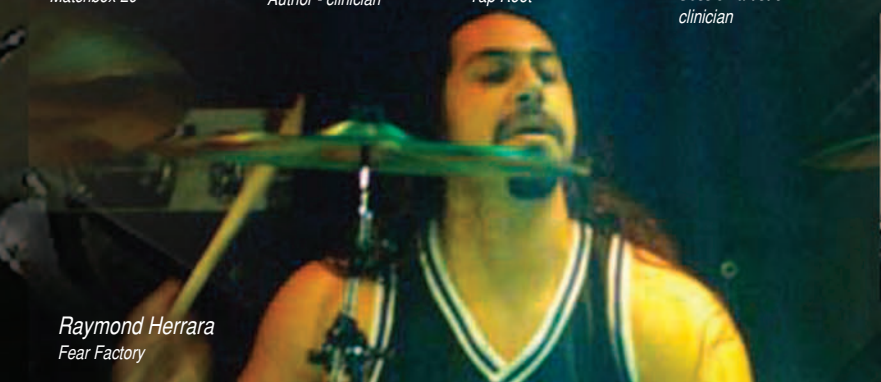
Full Devil Jacket



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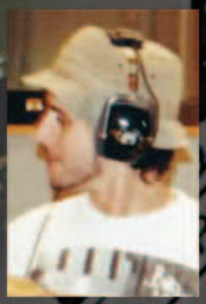

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Double Drive

Clint de Ganon
Broadway Shows
Hiram Bullock Band &
Will Lee

Tommy Igoe
"Lion King"

Billy Martin
Modeski, Martin & Woods

Richie Morales
Mike Stern

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The Distance Factor

This snare sound might have worked well in a recording studio with Dr. John. But from out in front of his band, it didn't work at all. The drum was completely lost among the frequencies of the other instruments. The drummer's ghost notes and subtleties were totally wasted. I advised him to crank the snares tighter, which he did. He complained later that the drum sounded choked to his ears. But from out front, it sounded great. Now I could hear those ghost notes.

Nobody knew more about how the "distance factor" affected a snare drum's sound than Buddy Rich. No matter where he played, Buddy always considered how his drum sounded to the audience, not just to himself. In most cases he tweaked the top head until it was extremely tight, then dialed up the snares until they were almost choked. Most drummers think he did this to facilitate his speedy technique, and that's partly true. But Buddy was also thinking about the audience. He normally worked in large concert venues, and he wanted the snare to project cleanly.

Interestingly, Buddy would slack off the tension on his snare in smaller rooms. I once heard him with a combo in a small, plush club, and the snare drum was far less tight than was normal for him. That was because he knew it would blend better with a small group and would sound better in an intimate room.

Tom Tones

Toms can turn to aural mush if they're not tuned appropriately for the room. A lot of drummers don't understand the difference between the fundamental tone of a drum and its overtones. They think that a drum that has a lot of ring and overtones will project a better sound to the audience. The truth is, an open, ringing drum will project farther, but it will also lose articulation in many acoustical environments.

Again, consider the room: If it's acoustically dampened with lots of carpeting and drapes, a wide-open sound will work fine, because much of the ring will be absorbed. If the room itself is "ringy" and has lots of glass and hard wood, the toms need to be more focused. And this doesn't mean automatically deadening down the drums. I'm not a fan of muffling. Sometimes a bit of muffling is needed, but diligent tuning is better and every bit as effective.

In a ringy room, tweak the top heads so they are somewhat tighter than the bottoms. This "dries" the drum sound a bit and adds attack. The opposite happens when the top heads are looser than the bottoms: The toms sound "wetter" and develop more overtones. Tuning both heads to the same pitch makes the fundamental tone more dominant, but will create a longer sustain (more "ring").

Cymbal Solutions

The "distance" factor affects the sound of cymbals as well as drums. I went to hear a jazz group recently. The drummer had the quintessential jazz set, with an 18" bass drum and small toms. He was also using a very dark-sounding ride cymbal and wood-tip sticks. The room was carpeted, but had high ceilings and wooden walls. The band was set up in a small open area adjacent to a staircase.

I was sitting in front of the band, some fifteen feet from the drummer. From there the drums sounded okay, but the ride cymbal sounded like mud. Its sound was buried underneath the bass and piano, and its timbre was very low and unpleasant.

Drummers need to understand that a cymbal's sound is as much a function of the acoustic setting as it is of the cymbal itself. What this drummer had done was go to a music store and buy the latest handmade dark ride cymbal in an effort to recreate the "old K" sound. He didn't realize that in some rooms a brighter sound is needed to balance the sound of the band.

What could this drummer have done to improve his ride sound? He could have used nylon-tipped sticks, which bring out the higher tones in a cymbal. Due to the fact that the room was acoustically "absorbent" and the cymbal was so dark to begin with, he would still have had an appropriate sound for jazz. Or he could have stayed with the wood-tipped sticks and switched to a brighter-sounding ride cymbal. The absorbency of the room, combined with the wood tips, would still have created the mellow sound he was after.

I think it was Charlie Watts who once talked about "the horror of the drumset," with all of its difficult-to-control timbres and sounds. But a bit of tuning and selectivity can go a long way toward projecting a good sound to your audience. All you need is an awareness of the "distance factor."

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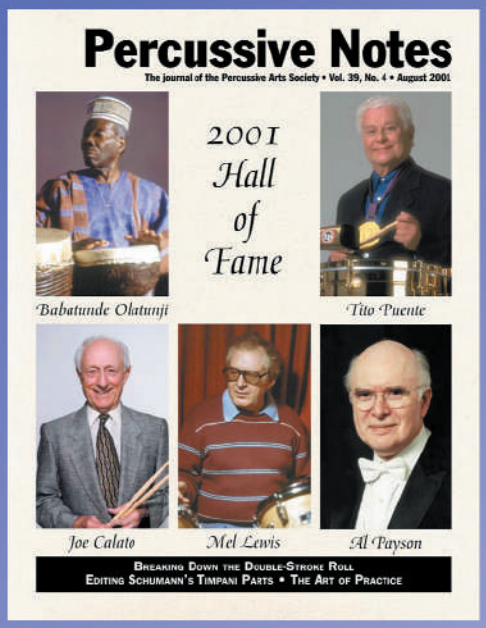

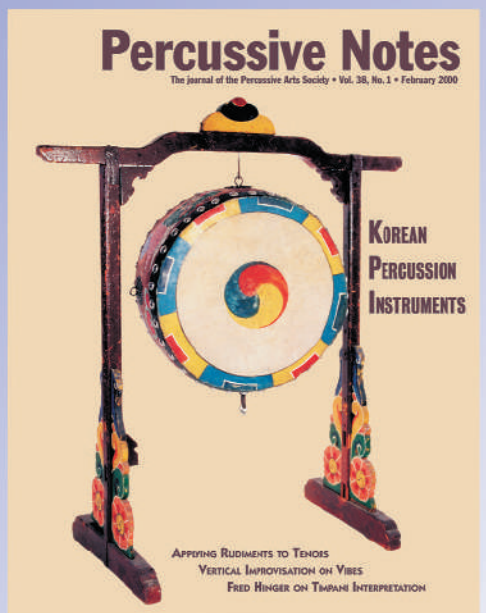

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RECORDINGS

KICKIN' OUT THE NEW

6 Eagle Eye Cherry Present/Future (MCA)

Cherry's latest release proves you can never have too many drummers. With a rotation of four drummer/percussionists (**Magnus Persson, Dominic Keyes, Jim Bogios**, and **Raul Rekow**), odds are in favor of rock-solid performances. *Present/Future*'s slick, well-recorded drum sounds possess a soulful overtone, inspired by Cherry's songwriting and execution.

7 New End Original Thriller (Jade Tree)

New End Original's **Charles Walker** has all of the most desirable drummer traits: great timing, a super sense of dynamics, lots of power, quick hands, tasty fills—and he performs from the gut. *Thriller* is an album you'll love to play along to when sitting down at your own kit.

6 The K.G.B. The K.G.B. (Dreamworks)

Love 'em or hate 'em, you can't escape boy bands. Cute and peppy, The K.G.B.'s version of extreme pop also happens to feature some serious drumming. Eclectic fills march alongside drum samples, laying down a backbeat for sing-song tunes. **Tom Travesty**'s simple approach works well in this radio-friendly release.

Fran Azzarto and Lisa Crouch

5 Various Artists Membraphonics (Monitor)

Membraphonics digs deep into rock's underground, offering works by the skinsmen and women of Fugazi, Modest Mouse, Will Oldham, and other college rock darlings. Highlights include Shipping News' **Kyle Crabtree**'s airy but profound groove on "To Drown Is To Live" and **Damon Che**'s (Don Caballero) indie-chops fest on "Oh Suzanna." Though there's not a lot in the way of song development here, listeners will be reminded that in terms of sound and texture, it's often the drummers who have the most interesting ideas. (www.monitorrecords.com) **Adam Budofsky**

9 King Crimson Vroom Vroom (disciplineglobalmobile)

Bill Bruford, Pat Mastelotto (dr, perc), Robert Fripp (gtr), Adrian Belew (gtr, vcl), Tony Levin (bs), Trey Gunn (touch gtr)

The mid-'90s King Crimson Double Trio was absolutely lethal. Mixing the metallic with the melodic, it was one of the most inventive dual-kit bands ever to weigh down a stage. Of the short-lived group's many live releases, *Vroom Vroom* is the gem. Bruford and Mastelotto exploit their partnership masterfully here, sometimes for maximum power, sometimes to spin a dizzying wheel of rhythm. In either mode, they impart a valuable lesson in creating thoughtfully complementary textures. Still, you might find your eyes darting between speakers as you wonder exactly what each of them is doing—and *how* they're doing it. Highlights of the two-disc set are a killer "21st Century Schizoid Man" and Bruford's redefining of "Indiscipline" with his thrillingly, um, *disciplined* intro solo. **Michael Parillo**

7 The Trey Gunn Band Live Encounter (www.firstworldmusic.com)

Bob Muller (dr, perc, tabla), Trey Gunn, Joe Mendelson (Warr gtr), Tony Geballe (gtr)

King Crimson's Trey Gunn is a pioneer of the Warr guitar, a finger-tapped stringed instrument with the range of a piano. The largely odd-time compositions on the Gunn Band's *Live Encounter*, heavy on interlocking rhythms from the guitarists, feel *a lot* like '80s Crimson (think the tune "Discipline") with a hint of mid-'70s Gong. Another similarity between Gunn's two groups is an unlimited appetite for newer, wilder tones. Bob Muller usually plays straight man as the strings weave and bob around him. He's rock-steady and dynamic, and serves as a great colorist. Like the guitarists, who use signal processing to make their axes sound different for each number, Muller switches often between drumset, tabla, and mixed percussion, sometimes in the same piece. **Michael Parillo**

8 Ozomatli Embrace The Chaos (Interscope/Almo Sounds)

Andrew Mendoza (dr), Jiro Yamaguchi, Justin Poree (perc), Rene "Spinobi" Dominguez (turntables), Wil-Dog Abers (bs), Asdrubal Sierra (trp, vcl), Raul Pacheco (gtr, vcl), Ulises Bella (sx, clr, vcl), Anthony "Kanetic Source" Stout (vcl)

Ozomatli set out to infuse their Latin-doused tracks with as much variety as possible—and they've nailed it with *Embrace The Chaos*. The band's large ensemble ranks high in versatility, combining elements of jazz, hip-hop, rock, and Caribbean. Andrew Mendoza's authentic feel locks just about everything in the pocket, notably on the upbeat rock/Latin fusion track "Guerrillero," which flows seamlessly between straight-ahead rock verses and punchy Latin choruses. Though many bands have miserably failed to place a mix of ideas on one disc and make them interact, *Embrace The Chaos* is outstandingly cohesive. **Waleed Rashidi**

8 Herring, Lavitz, Hayward, Gradney Endangered Species (Tone Center)

Richie Hayward (dr), Kenny Gradney (bs), T Lavitz (kybd), Jimmy Herring (gtr)

Mining the same greasy New Orleans funk grooves of his main band, Little Feat, Richie Hayward sounds as solid as ever on this cool blend of The Dixie Dregs and the Feat. A perfect counterpoint to the heavy rock fusion chops of the rest of this band, Hayward plays with a loose, dirty style with little polish but lots of grit. "Pickled Hearing," "Cats Out Da Bag," and "Camel Lope" are all classic Hayward grooves that the drummer has built his reputation on. This is a real treat for southern-fried fusion fans. **Mike Haid**

ratingscale poor 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 classic

9 The Smashing Pumpkins Greatest Hits (Virgin)

Jimmy Chamberlin, Matt Cameron, Matt Walker (dr), Billy Corgan (gtr, vcl), James Iha (gtr), D'arcy Wretzky (bs), others

This double-disc set is Jimmy Chamberlin's showcase as one of the best rock drummers of the '90s. (Top three? Cameron, Grohl, and Jimmy? Yep.) Disc one, *Rotten Apples*, reminds that Chamberlin played some of the most intense parts of his time. Jimmy played with pure conviction and intensity on every one of the Pumpkins' hits, and there were many. Disc two, *Judas O*, is mostly filled with rarities and B-sides, and some of the drumming here is mind-boggling. (Check out the insane fills on "Lucky Thirteen.") There is a dog or two in this set, including the tracks from the no-drummer Pumpkins era. Doesn't matter. Chamberlin should be remembered and respected for his body of work, and this is a *great* place to get it. **Ted Bonar**

8 Mark Levine & The Latin Tinge Serengeti (mark@marklevine.com)

Paul Van Wageningen (dr), Michael Spiro, Jose Luis Gomez (perc), Mark Levine (pno), Peter Barshay (bs)

Veteran San Francisco pianist Levine here serves up a smoldering set of Latin jazz. Drummer Paul Van Wageningen brings a dynamic Bay Area fusion style to the proceedings, combining the Reyes family's independent vibe and the Escovedo gang's grounding in the street. McCoy Tyner's "Effendi" is a polyrhythmic playground for this group, and Van Wageningen's ride cymbal bell tells a story all its own. Michael Spiro and Van Wageningen carve an unforgettable percussion line into the Stanley Turrentine classic "Sugar." Spiro, quite the craftsman himself, lays into some monstrous conga licks on Levine's "Serengeti," and takes it to timbales with the same vim and vision on Joe Henderson's "A Shade Of Jade." **Robin Tolleson**

8 Transatlantic Bridge Across Forever (Metal Blade)

Mike Portnoy (dr, vcl), Neal Morse (kybd, vcl, gtr, mandln), Pete Trewavas (bs, vcl), Roine Stolt (gtr, vcl, kybd, perc)

This is an ambitious and entertaining sophomore effort featuring members of prog rock bands Spock's Beard, Flower Kings, Dream Theater, and Marillion. Incorporating the styles of classic art rockers Yes and Genesis, Transatlantic shows focus and proficiency in crafting these epic songs. Similarly, Mike Portnoy could have easily turned this side project into a drumming tour de force. Instead he picks his spots and even shows a bit of humility. (Check out the beginning of "Suite Charlotte Pike": Portnoy admits with refreshing honesty how he misses his cue.) At times Mike plays tight, explosive fills that mimic a keyboard or guitar line, at others he lays back, painting colorful patterns during sweeping compositions like "Duel With The Devil" and "Stranger In Your Soul"—each nearly a half hour in length. Ambitious? Without a doubt. Inspirational? Undeniably. **Will Romano**

8 Charles Lloyd Hyperion With Higgins (ECM)

Billy Higgins (dr, perc), Charles Lloyd (tn sx, taragato), Brad Mehldau (pno), Larry Grenadier (bs), John Abercrombie (gtr)

One more reason to mourn the loss of the great Billy Higgins and to celebrate the music he's left behind. Recorded a few months before Higgins' death, *Hyperion* is culled from the same sessions as this quintet's previous *The Water Is Wide*. More energized than *Water*'s tracks, these cuts share Lloyd's signature spiritual boil. From straight swinging to wide-open improv, it's an incredibly warm-toned, connected fellowship. Lloyd's fluid phrasing is transporting, while the amazing young Mehldau spins more fresh ideas in a chorus than most manage in an entire disc. And master Higgins is once again magic. He leads the dance with elegance and understatement. His incredible touch, melodic sense, and surging swing could only come from a great at peak maturity. Lloyd and Higgins came up together as teens, and these later-life sessions retain a sense of wonder that hasn't jaded one calendar day. **Jeff Potter**

DROPPIN' THE BOP

While breaking no new ground, three new recordings feature jazz alumni strutting their well-defined personalities—and showing why the hard bop underground endures.

8 Duane Eubanks Second Take (TCB)

Trumpeter Duane Eubanks chooses his drummer well in **Ralph Peterson**, who matches every trumpet shout with propulsive jabs, buzzing kicks, and walloping right hooks. *Second Take* shows Peterson in a variety of grooves, including an Art Blakey-ish shuffle, a bluesy march, reggae, a light African rhythm, and the scorching bop of his own composition, "The Enemy Within."

7 John Tank Quartet Canadian Sunset (TCB)

Mike Clark will forever be remembered for his innovative fusion-funk with The Headhunters. But Mike has for years made his living playing the kind of breezy swing that permeates *Canadian Sunset*. This is a simmering album that shows Clark's light, driving cymbal touch and sharp yet subtle drum interplay. Always tasteful, Clark doesn't get a chance to crank here, except on the slow-boiling "Talk To The Hand," where he builds a relentless crescendo of rhythm.

7 John McLean Easy Go (Premonition)

McLean is a rising guitarist who alternates between acoustic and electric, summoning the spirit of Pat Martino throughout. **Adam Nussbaum**'s billowing ride cymbal and atmospheric drumming is the stringman's perfect foil, keeping the music from drifting into moody mannerisms. Nuss percolates on Middle Eastern, organ trio, and spacey jazz styles, though his soloing space is all too brief. When allowed, though, Nussbaum surges and swells like a mighty monsoon.

Ken Micallef

WHAT IN THE WORLD

On Sanjeev & Karuna's *Inspiration Unfolding*, we're treated to dreamy Persian love poems (ghazals) all sung in Urdu in rhyming couplets (like Chaucer in English). These tributes to poets from the thirteenth to twentieth centuries (all original) feature guitar, sarangi, piano, and amazing tabla work by **Hanif Khan**. (www.silvascreen.com)

Thione Seck & Raam Daan Live is a rocking Senegalese set recorded live for the Djoniba label (master drummer/dancer Djoniba Mouflet). Thione Seck, a griot (storyteller), has a powerful voice that soars above his band Raam Daan, which is driven by **Souleymane Diop** on traps, and **Medoune N'Diaye, Bara N'Diaye**, and **N'Diguel Dieng** on percussion. (www.djoniba.com)

The group 40 Fingers, led by percussionist **Pete Barnhart**, really cooks on *Mask Off*. This quartet explores new territories in sound with traditional djembes and djun djun as well as found percussion and metal sculptures reminiscent of Harry Partch's instruments. Soothing and quirky. (www.40fingers.com)

Dhol Foundation's *Big Drum: Small World*, courtesy **Johnny Kalsi** of Trans-Global Underground and Afro-Celt Sound System, boasts lots of hot bhangra drumming and percussion layering, both acoustic and electronic(a). Dance-a-rama! (www.shaktirecords.com)

On *Sabor Profundo* the incredibly lively Cuban charanga-style Orquesta América (founded in 1942) preserves a classic sound that still tastes fresh today. Check out the great rhythm section led by Orlando Perez on piano (Orquesta Aragón) and bongo player **Francisco Oropesa Fernandez** (Septeto Nacional), as they plow through danzon, montuno, salsa, bolero, and cha-cha-cha. (www.codmusic.com) **David Licht**

9 Prince The Rainbow Children (NPG Records)

John Blackwell (dr), Prince (all other instruments), with Najee (sx), Larry Graham (bs)

On *The Rainbow Children*, Prince takes us on an exploration of his many talents. Floating between jazz on the title track, to fusion on "Everywhere," to his trademark funk on "The Work Pt. 1," "1+1+1 Is 3," and "The Everlasting Now," Prince has come up with two of his most brilliant pieces of work—this recording, and drummer John Blackwell. Throughout *Rainbow Children*, Prince gives Blackwell the opportunity to shine. John plays whatever style he's challenged to, as Prince himself says, magnificently. Whether dancing lightly on his cymbals, ferociously powering fills, or laying down feel-good funky beats, Blackwell can claim this record to be as much his as it is Prince's. The two musicians complement each other wonderfully throughout *The Rainbow Children*, especially in the trippy-funky "Family Name." Check it out, Rainbow Children, it's time 2 rise! **Billy Amendola**

6 Suicide Machines Steal This Record (Hollywood)

Ryan Vanderberghe (dr), Jason Navarro (vcl), Dan Lukacinsky (gtr, vcl), Royce Nunley (bs, vcl)

Carefully molding their sound into a lightweight Rancid after aiming for the lighter, happy-go-lucky pop of their previous, self-titled release, The Suicide Machines have comfortably regressed into a position they know best: snotty, edgy skate punk with the occasional ska tinge. Though the songwriting and arrangements on *Steal This Record* are rather elementary and at times redundant, drummer Ryan Vanderberghe performs consistently, sometimes creatively, and always with purpose. Unfortunately, it appears as if Vanderberghe's drumming is stifled by the aforementioned minimal songwriting scope and depth. **Waleed Rashidi**

4 Sting . . . All This Time (A&M)

Manu Katché (dr), Marcos Suzano, Haoua Abdenacer (perc), Sting (gtr, bs, vcl), Dominic Miller (gtr), Kipper (kybd), Chris Botti (trp), others

Maybe you had to be there (I wasn't), but this live recording is an absolute bore. Painful, even. Manu plays appropriately enough, of course, but gone is the magic that he brings to the table when given the chance to actually *play the drums*. I've spent years defending Sting as one of the brilliant musicians of his time, and gone to great lengths to defend him as one of rock music's best bass players. Clearly, however, this is a man who has forgotten how to rock. It *is* possible to crank at a low volume, and in jazz-inflected or bossa-tinged arrangements of rock songs. But Sting doesn't, and the band, while filled to the brim with talent and potential, has fallen into a dark hole of the anti-groove. Zzzz. **Ted Bonar**

6 Burning Airlines Identikit (DeSoto)

Peter Moffett (dr), J. Robbins (gtr), Mike Harbin (bs)

Like its predecessor, Burning Airlines' second album, *Identikit*, is filled with guitar-driven post-punk modern rock songs. From the opening song, "Outside The Aviary," Peter Moffett pushes things along, throwing in some tasteful double-bass towards the end. "The Surgeon's House" is propelled with brushes in a triplet feel, before Moffett switches and lays some nice hi-hat patterns on us. Throughout the album, it's obvious that Moffett plays for the song. But the notable element in his playing is how he uses one idea as the foundation for each song, keeping other concepts in reserve. If you're looking for minimal but aggressive drumming, *Identikit* is a good place to start. **Martin Patmos**

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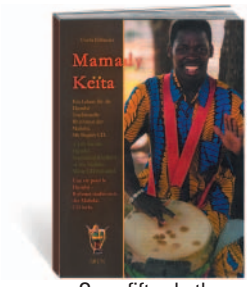
9 Mamady Keita: A Life For The Djembe with Uschi Billmeier (Arun-Verlag)

level: intermediate to advanced, $40 (with CD)



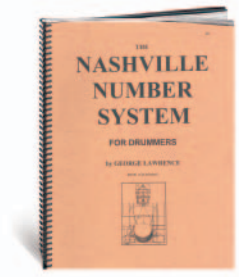
Elvin Jones once advised anyone interested in jazz drumming to study West African drumming traditions. The book/CD package *A Life For The Djembe* by Mamady Keita is a good starting point. Keita, who is originally from Guinea, is a titan of the popular goblet-shaped djembe and a walking encyclopedia of traditional rhythms of the Malinke (the majority ethnic group in Guinea).

Here Keita presents complex interlocking patterns for drummers eager to dig into African polyrhythms; for djembe players the set is a resource of time-honored rhythms and cultural background on the drum. These rhythms accompany harvest festivals and rites of passage in Africa, and the traditional ritual setting of the music is discussed in the book.

Over fifty rhythms are transcribed, each with accompanying djembe, dunun (bass drums), and bell patterns, plus brief "breaks" to cue each rhythm. These simplify the tricky business of picking apart the dense mesh of sounds. On the disc each part is isolated, then stacked up one at a time. Finally the lead djembe solos (not transcribed) over the complete rhythms. Using the drum's three strokes, Keita plays stingingly crisp bursts over the layered rhythms. Every rhythm in the set has parts for at least five players—something challenging for every level. (African Rhythm Traders, [503] 397-4343, www.rhythmtraders.com) **John Adamian**

7 The Nashville Number System For Drummers by George Lawrence (Drumroom Publishing)

level: advanced, $20 (with CD)



Your initial reaction when inspecting this 60-page, spiral-bound softcover may be, "Where's the beef?" But packed within are meaty chunks of practical info for drummers who wish to learn more about the number-based music notation system. For those unfamiliar with how the NNS works, Lawrence, a session drummer and instructor, gives concise explanations. As the name implies, numbers, usually configured in a row of four, are assigned to chords, notes, and entire measures of music. The rhythmic and harmonic structures are altered by using symbols and markings such as diamonds, accents, and hash lines. Drummers make tiny marks on their sheet music to represent changes in feel and time. Lawrence gives examples of this by providing transcriptions of three songs on the accompanying CD as well as actual hand-written charts used by known and unknown session players.

According to some Nashville drummers *MD* talked with, the real value of this newfangled approach is having musicians with varying degrees of experience speak the same language. This book, along with a working knowledge of music theory (even a limited one), will help make sense of all this methodology now being used in Nashville and other cities. (www.drumguru.com) **Will Romano**

9 Beatles Gear by Andy Babiuk (Backbeat Books)

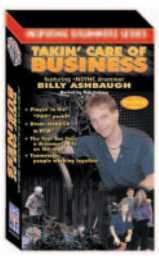
level: all, $40

Over the span of their almost forty years as popular music's most influential band, The Beatles have had countless books written about them. In *Beatles Gear*, Andy Babiuk goes the extra mile by writing a unique book about the *equipment* the band used throughout their career. Babiuk interviewed more than four hundred people who worked with or were closely associated with the group. He also watched miles of film and listened to hundreds of recordings. *Beatles Gear* was clearly worth the time and effort. First-hand insights and anecdotes from musicians, manufactures, roadies, engineers, and producers teach us how the Beatles achieved their sounds. More than 300 jump-off-the-page photos, most of which are seen here for the first time, bring their words to life. Check out the 1962 Premier kit Ringo was using when he first joined the group, and, of course, his famous oyster black pearl Ludwig kit in 1963 (first with a 20" bass drum and then later a 22" with Rogers Swiv-O-Matic drum mounts). One warning: Hide this book from your bandmates; you may never get it back. **Billy Amendola**

VIDEOS

7 Billy Ashbaugh Takin' Care Of Business (Warner Bros.)

level: beginner to advanced, $39.95



Spotlighting 'N Sync drummer Billy Ashbaugh, this third installment from the "Inspiring Drummers Series" is less a chops-builder than a head shrinker. Through interviews with Ashbaugh, 'N Sync's Justin Timberlake and Joey Fatone, other players in the band, and Ashbaugh's wife, Jenie (who also performs), this tape attempts to uncover what makes Billy tick. The focus here is on teamwork (dubbed "teamology"), managing your practice time, and such intangibles as creativity in a pop music setting.

What we learn about the quick-handed, fleet-footed drummer's playing comes straight from observing him smoke on six remixed 'N Sync songs and four others written specifically for this video by producer and host Bob Gatzen. Tight, nasty grooves abound, but Ashbaugh doesn't often explain the motivation behind them. However, because he humanizes the more mechanical aspects of this insanely popular boy band's music, his bubbling performances just might move you to think that—gasp!—'N Sync *rocks*.

Completing this package is a twenty-track CD that presents multiple takes of songs featured in the video, with and without drum tracks. Allowing the viewer to practice along to these tracks drives home the point that each drummer

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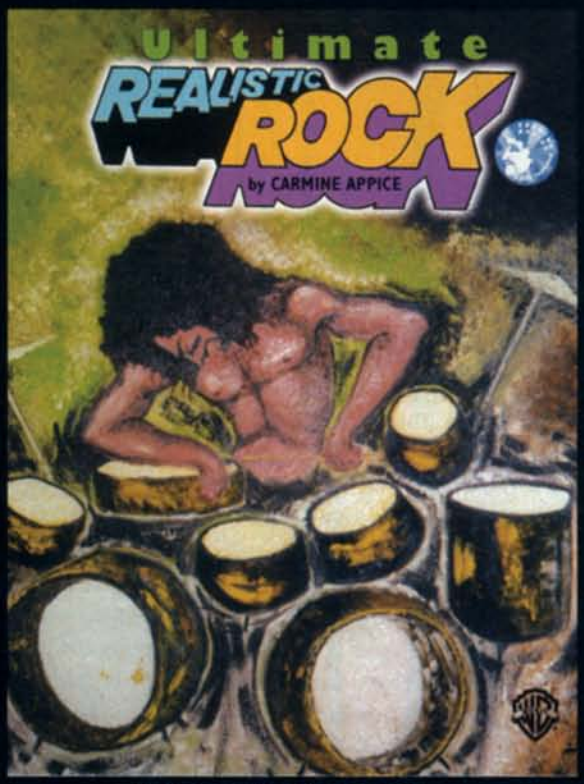

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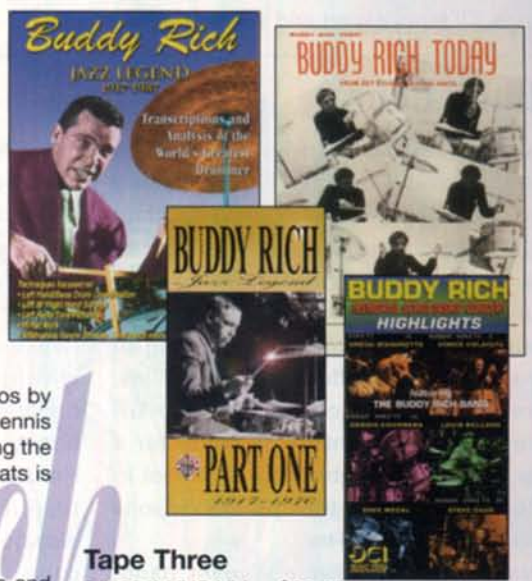

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Tape Four features Omar Hakim, Will Calhoun and Neil Peart.

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Joe Buscher

Thirty-two-year-old Joe Buscher has parlayed playing in his college marching band and studying at Music Tech in Minneapolis into a varied drumming career. That career includes stints with several pop/rock bands, a tour with ABBA tribute act ABBA Salutely, and two years with a show band called Atlantis.

"Atlantis played all over the Midwest at casinos, bars, and corporate gigs," says Joe. "We also did a Caribbean cruise. But it wasn't all fun and games. I learned that being in a successful band involves plenty of hard work—a lot of which has nothing to do with music."

Joe's current gig is with a funk/blues band called Mojo. The material varies from Chaka Khan, Etta James, and The Meters to Medeski Martin & Wood and Lenny Kravitz (along with a few originals). Joe's demo reveals an expressive, funky style that's influenced by Bernard Purdie, Peter Criss, and Buddy Rich, along with Music Tech instructors Gordy Knudtson, Dave Stanoch, Paul Steuber, and Jess Wheeler. Joe is also a teacher himself, with a dozen private students. He plays a Yamaha Tour Custom kit with an Impact snare drum, as well as Zildjian and Sabian cymbals.

"Over the years," says Joe, "I've found three things to be the most important: a 'less is more' approach to drumming, the ability to play many styles of music, and getting along well with others. I'm confident that if I can master those three things, I'll have a long and successful career."

Kevin Sharpe

Springfield, Massachusetts native Kevin Sharpe is a multi-threat musician. A talented drummer, mallet percussionist, and drum programmer, he's also accomplished on piano, organ, and bass guitar. Add singing and producing to his skills list, too.

Kevin began singing in his church choir at the age of seven. By the time he was eleven he was drumming for the choir. Although primarily based in gospel music ever since, Kevin's experience also includes jazz, R&B, blues, rock, country, Latin, classical, and show music. His varied influences include Max Roach, Art Blakey, Tito Puente, Rush, Yes, The Gap Band, The SOS Band, and Prince. Since graduating with degrees in music education and jazz performance from the University of Massachusetts, Kevin has performed with artists including Archie Shepp, Steve Turre, and John Blake, and has recorded with Blake, Joe Sallins, Brittany Ham, and Charles Langford.

Kevin's current focus is Fellowship, a contemporary gospel group for which he is drummer, vocalist, instrumentalist, and producer. Their CD, *By Faith* (Prosperous Records, www.fellowship1.com), displays Kevin's talents in all areas, including drumming that is tasteful, exciting, and always musical.

Kevin currently endorses Noble & Cooley drums. He also uses Roland and Alesis electronics and Sabian cymbals. "My goal," he says, "is to allow God to use my gift of music to exalt Him and to remove burdens from the lives of as many people as possible."

Chuck Cobb

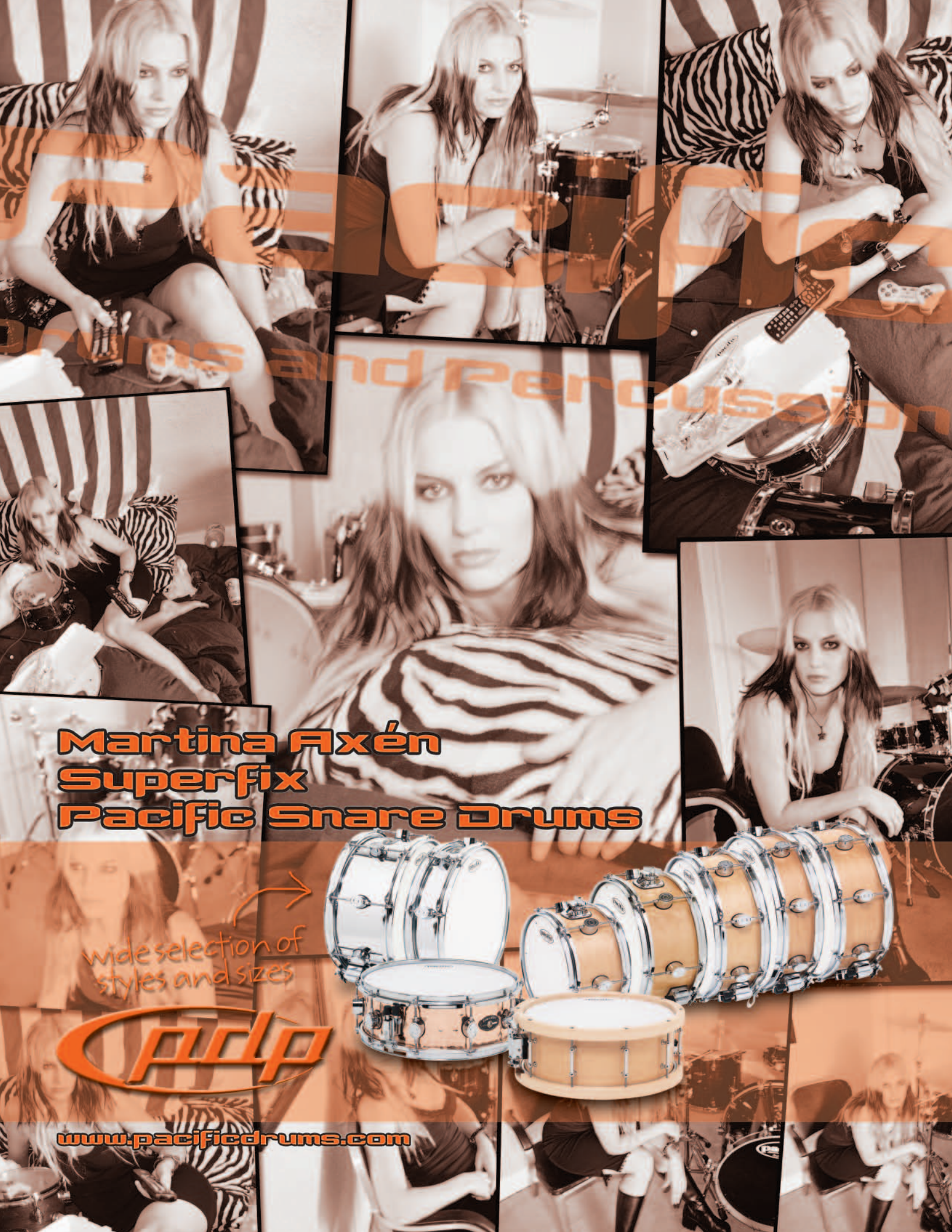
"I started learning the drums when I was fifteen," says Chuck Cobb. "I studied every drummer I could to see what their limbs were doing. After two years of 'air drumming,' I finally got to play on a drumkit. A few years later I bought a Gretsch kit, on which I played along to the sounds of my influences: Phil Collins, Max Weinberg, Tico Torres, and Gil Moore." Chuck went on to study for a year at the Wilmington Music School in Delaware, and then took private lessons for another year and half.

Never wanting to join a cover band, Chuck looked for local musicians who had original material and needed a drummer. He eventually hooked up with Delaware band Urban Sprawl. "Among other projects," says Chuck, "we created a charity CD called *Beyond The Bridges* (www.urbansprawlband.com) with guest appearances by artists like Ike Willis (ex-Zappa band), John Young (ex-Asia), and Ken Hensley (ex-Uriah Heep). It was my first time in the studio. Needless to say, it was quite an experience. It led me to the conclusion that I really wanted to be a studio musician."

Chuck is still playing with Urban Sprawl, as well as with local artists Elby Rogers and EMBS, both of whom have CDs slated for mid-2002 release. He uses Gretsch drums, Zildjian cymbals, and Yamaha and Roland electronics.

"I want to do more studio projects, and perhaps go on tour to promote them," Chuck concludes. "In the meantime, I'll continue to drum at my church while I seek out opportunities to create drum tracks for high-profile original artists. My door is always open to that 'big challenge.'"

If you'd like to appear in *On The Move*, send us an audio or video cassette of your best work (preferably both solo and with a band) on three or four songs, along with a brief bio sketch and a high-quality color or black & white close-up photo. (Polaroids are not acceptable. Photos will not be paid for or credited.) The bio sketch should include your full name and age, along with your playing style(s), influences, current playing situation (band, recording project, freelance artist, etc.), how often and where you are playing, and what your goals are (recording artist, session player, local career player, etc.). Include any special items of interest pertaining to what you do and how you do it, and a list of the equipment you use regularly. Send your material to On The Move, Modern Drummer Publications, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009. Material **cannot** be returned, so please **do not** send original tapes or photos.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A Perfect Circle's

JOSH FREESE

Going Mobile With The Notorious One Man Drum Orgy

Story by Waleed Rashidi • Photos by Alex Solca

For most drummers, their practice space is their personal creation lair. It's where they hash out bits and pieces of a fill, groove, or tune. Where they experiment with new gadgets, different head combinations, alternate tunings, and cymbal placement. But for Josh Freese, the monster drummer you've likely seen backing A Perfect Circle, The Vandals, Devo, Stevie Nicks, The Indigo

Girls, or Guns N' Roses, his practice location allows none of that. In fact, despite Josh's being one of the most in-demand players alive, he doesn't really *have* a place to practice his drums.

A bona fide multi-instrumentalist, Freese *does* have the ability to practice, write, and record his music—right at home, in a modest home studio setup. It's just that when it comes to playing his main ax, his role as father to a newborn takes precedence. But this doesn't mean the creativity has to stop. Though Josh says he does have plans to soundproof his garage for an acoustic drum setup, "For the time being," he explains, "I can play stuff using headphones or monitors at a low level." For now, Freese says, his trusty drum machine will do.

Freese began writing songs at the age of thirteen, after he got a 4-track tape deck. "I didn't really have a drum machine back then," he recalls. "But I had a Dynacord electronic drumset, which at the time was the shit. It had pre-programmed beats built in, so I'd record those to tape. And since I didn't know how to play any chords on guitar yet, I'd play a couple of notes on bass guitar and make a really simple bass line. Then I'd sing stuff over the top." Fast forward a few years, and Josh had advanced to the point where he was able to record his debut solo effort, *The Notorious One Man Orgy* (Kung Fu Records), almost entirely by himself.

But back to that acoustic drumming issue. Surely Josh aches to play at home? Not necessarily. Josh says that, since he's not exclusive to the drums, he doesn't view the concept of "practice" as most drummers do. In fact, he says he'd prefer to pluck some nickel, tickle the ivories, or write songs rather than grind out hour after hour of beats, rudiments, and patterns behind the kit.

Given that his music-making isn't tied to a bulky drumset, Freese says that there are in fact three places where he "practices." The main location is his Long Beach, California home. The house is located just a few miles from that of No Doubt's Adrian Young, a place Josh has been known to visit when he *must* jam drums alone. A well-kept, discrete single-family residence that he recently moved into, the tastefully decorated pad is home to Freese's girlfriend, his two cats and (ceramic) dog, his newborn son, and plenty of baby-related gadgets.

It also houses Josh's own little studio, which you see here. The setup is situated in a bedroom painted in fresh green and blue tones and decorated with a vast array of knick-knacks. The musical tools on hand revolve around a Roland VSS-1680 Workstation, into which Freese plugs his keyboards, Les Paul guitar, drum machines, and whatever else he chooses to layer his tracks with.

Josh explains that his second practice location is the tour bus. When he's on the road with The Vandals or A Perfect Circle, Freese will pack a full collection of music tools, and uses his time off to fine-tune his songwriting techniques.

"I've got this little Yamaha QY-70 sequencer, which can fit in my pocket," Freese enthuses. "It's amazing. It takes batteries, and you can use headphones with it. When I'm on the bus, or in a hotel room on a day off, I've got a guitar, a bass, a little Alesis drum box, a couple of guitar pedals, and my Roland Workstation. It's awesome. It's all good enough quality that by the end of the day, I can take what I've recorded to a professional studio, dump the stuff down to 24-track, and use the drum machine as a click track to overdub live drums. All of a sudden, a track's done!"

Like most Southern Californians, Josh seems to spend a lot of his time behind the wheel, stuck in traffic. But Freese makes the most of otherwise wasted time. Actually, Josh considers his car to be his third studio option—even if it's not quite equipped with the same technology he uses in the above-mentioned locations. "I'll put in mixes of songs I'm working on, or music I have to write melodies to, and I'll just hum along," he explains. "I always have a couple of tape recorders in the car, and I'll sing song ideas into them. You can hum something over and over in your head, but the second you turn on the radio, you'll forget it all."

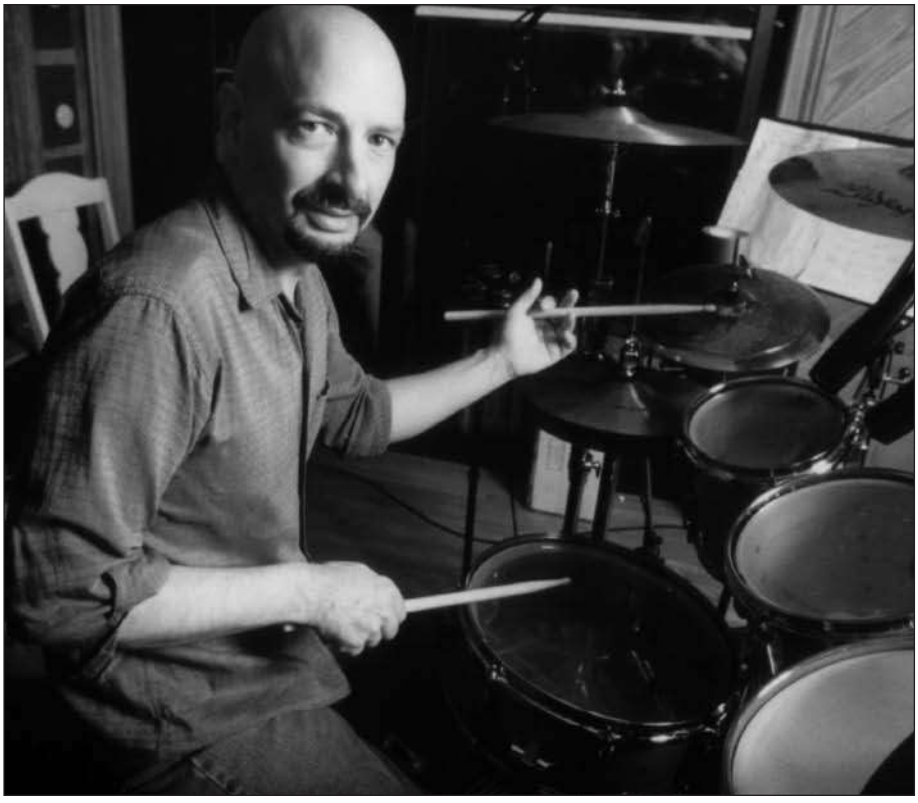
So when does Josh practice his *drumming*? Apparently never. Freese offers it up: "My off time consists of maybe one day a week, and during the other six days I'm playing drums, whether I like it or not. I mean, I *always* enjoy doing it. But usually even on days when I'm tired or burnt out, I still have to play drums. So I try to find something else to do when I'm not working. And when I do want to play drums on an off day, I like playing with other people.

"I get bored hearing myself play drums," Josh adds with smile. "After about eight minutes I'm like, This doesn't sound very good—I want my bass player!"

Choosing The Right Equipment

Tips For The Jazz Drumming Novice

by Steve Smith



I recently did a tour with an Indian tabla player named Sandip Burman. [See February's *Percussion Today* column.] Before the tour Sandip came to my house to show me some of the rhythms he'd be using in his music. When we first played together, he had trouble hearing himself, and I also had trouble hearing him. It wasn't because I was hitting the drums too hard or playing too loud, it was because the cymbals and drums I was using weren't the right match to the sound of his instrument. As soon as I put up my flat ride cymbals and played a kit with smaller drums, we could both hear the tablas. This was a graphic example of how important it is to have a variety of cymbals and drums to choose from in order to complement the sound of the different musicians you play with.

The sound you get from your cymbals and drums is very important. Choosing the right equipment is the first step toward giving yourself the best sound to work with.

I've been asked many times by young drummers what I think of a certain ride cymbal, snare drum, drumhead, or stick. I can let them know what I think of the equipment relative to *my* musical needs.

But the more relevant question is: What are *their* musical needs?

Also, many drummers now practice with earplugs or headphones. That's good in terms of protecting their hearing, but it can have a tendency to make them play louder and be less sensitive to the actual sound they are getting from the instrument. The true sound you get from your cymbals and drums is *very* important. And while it mainly depends on your touch, choosing the right equipment is the first step toward giving yourself the best sound to work with.

Cymbals

Choosing ride cymbals is very important for drummers. This is especially true when playing jazz, because most of the rhythms being played are based on the ride cymbal. I've noticed that many young drummers who ask me about certain ride cymbals usually aren't taking into consideration the music they'll be performing and the other musicians they'll be playing with. They talk about the cymbal itself, using terms like "cutting through," "projection," and other qualities that are actually the opposite of what they need if they're playing jazz with acoustic instrumentalists.

If you're playing with an acoustic bass, it's important to have ride cymbals that are not too loud and will blend well with the sound of the bass. I think this is why many jazz drummers prefer darker cymbal sounds: They blend with the warm sound of the upright bass. I've told many young drummers who are just starting to play jazz to find ride cymbals that will sound nice in the room and will be pleasant for the other musicians to hear. This often surprised them, because it's very different from the information they get from media advertising that makes drumming look like a violent act that requires loud cymbals, powerful drums, and sticks and heads that won't break.

The idea of "cutting through" may have some relevance for big band playing. But more than volume, the *clarity* of the beat is what is important. While you *may* want a brighter ride cymbal for big band than if you're playing small group, it depends on the band and what kind of venues you'll be playing. If you're in a college big band and are mainly rehearsing in a room at school, you need to take that reality into consideration when choosing a cymbal.

The only times I've needed cymbals that "cut through" was when I've been playing with a rock group that uses highly distorted guitars that cover every frequency. Other than that, volume is not an issue, and neither is "projection." Cymbals tend to be loud to begin with, especially if they are not played with a mature touch.

I generally use relatively dark rides when playing acoustic jazz, and rides that are a bit brighter when playing electric jazz. When I've played with tablas or an acoustic instrumentalist in a small room or club, I've found that the lightest flat rides give me the airy sound needed to

blend with and not overpower the other players.

I've also found that when playing small-group acoustic jazz, crash cymbals are unnecessary. If you need a crash sound, you can get it from a good ride cymbal. I like to add crash cymbals when playing with a big band to accentuate some of the band figures. Splash sounds and specialty sounds can be useful in small group playing, but the overall musical concept must determine whether or not these sounds are appropriate.

If you have at least a few different ride cymbals and additional cymbal sounds (crashes and splashes), you can make choices depending on the musical situations you find yourself in.

Drums

I find it useful to have different-size bass drums with my drumsets. A 22" bass drum gives me a very different feel and sound from an 18" or 20" drum. I tend to use a smaller bass drum for jazz playing.

The way I set the drum up with heads and muffling is also very important. I use a head with no hole cut in it on the front of the drum, and no pillow or "stuffing" inside. The only muffling I use is a felt strip on the batter head and sometimes on the front head. This way I can play with more dynamics, and the drum has a nice tone instead of just a flat thud.

Here's an important fact for young drummers who may never have played a bass drum that has no pillow in it: That sound and feel was designed for studio playing. In my opinion, it doesn't work for acoustic jazz. A double-headed bass drum, played with a nice touch (having the beater come off the head as opposed to "burying" the beater), will blend well with an acoustic bass and give the band a warm bottom-end sound and feel. If you need to mike the bass drum, place the mic' on the batter head (as if miking a tom) and you'll get a great sound.

Choosing drumheads and tuning the toms are also important factors when playing acoustic jazz. I tune my toms relatively high, and I like to use coated heads because they produce a warmer and slightly softer sound than clear heads. I tend to stay away from heads with built-in muffling. Again, they were developed for the dead "studio" sound.

Sticks

Stick choices are very important for the jazz novice. With much of today's music taking place at extremely loud volumes, heavy sticks have become popular. By simply using a lighter stick, you can get a more musical sound out of your instrument. I generally use a stick that is basically a 5A made of hickory, which is a medium-weight stick. But I carry lighter sticks with me. If I'm playing in a small room with all acoustic musicians, I may use a light stick made of maple, which will help me play with a softer sound. Having a selection of brushes, mallets, and other types of "specialty sticks" is also important in order to have the ability to adjust your sound and volume to the musicians and the room.

This is just scratching the surface of what to look for in choosing equipment for playing jazz. But I hope it gives you some new ideas to work with.

Steve uses Zildjian cymbals, Sonor drums, Vic Firth sticks, Remo heads, and DW pedals.

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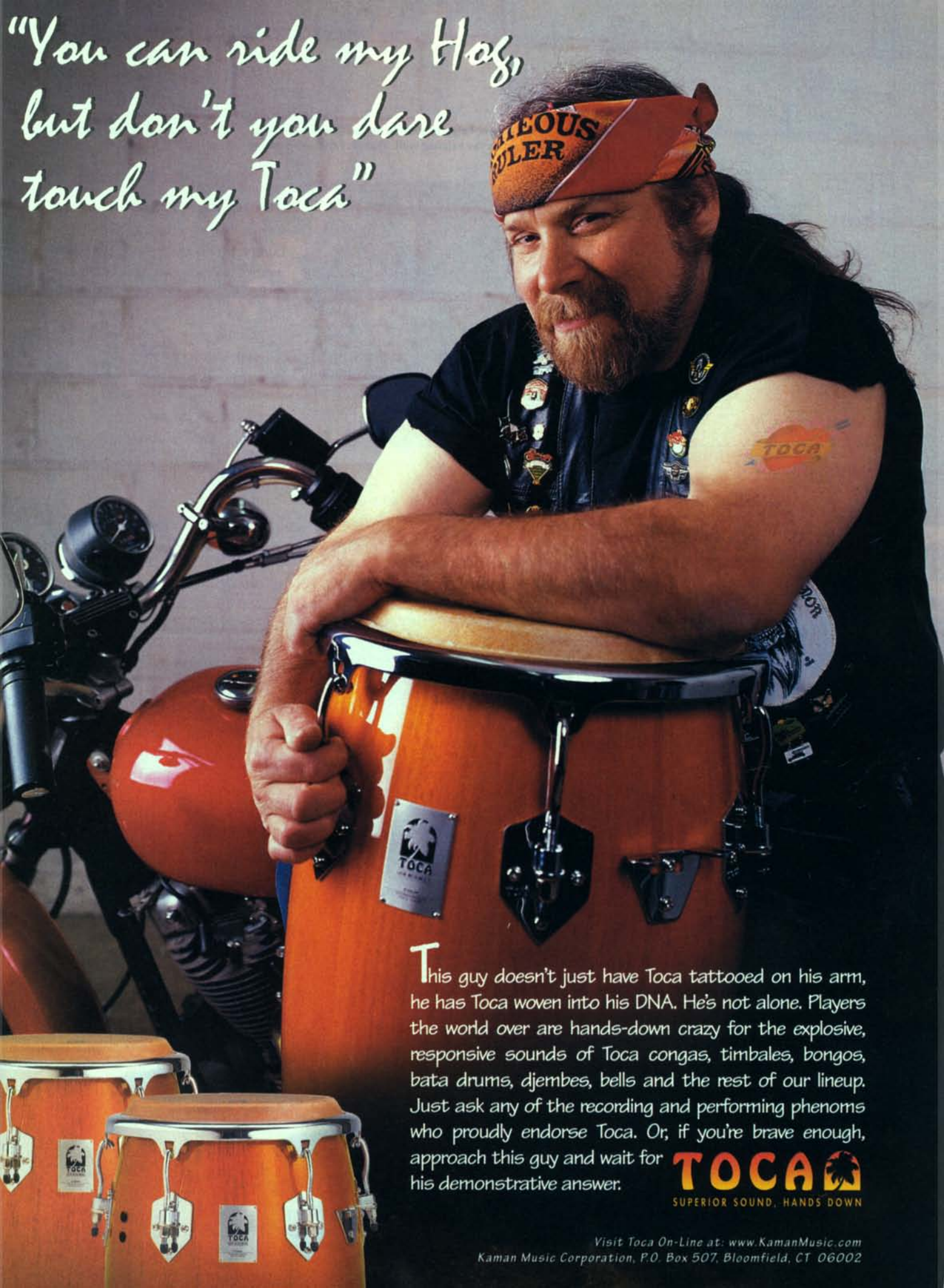

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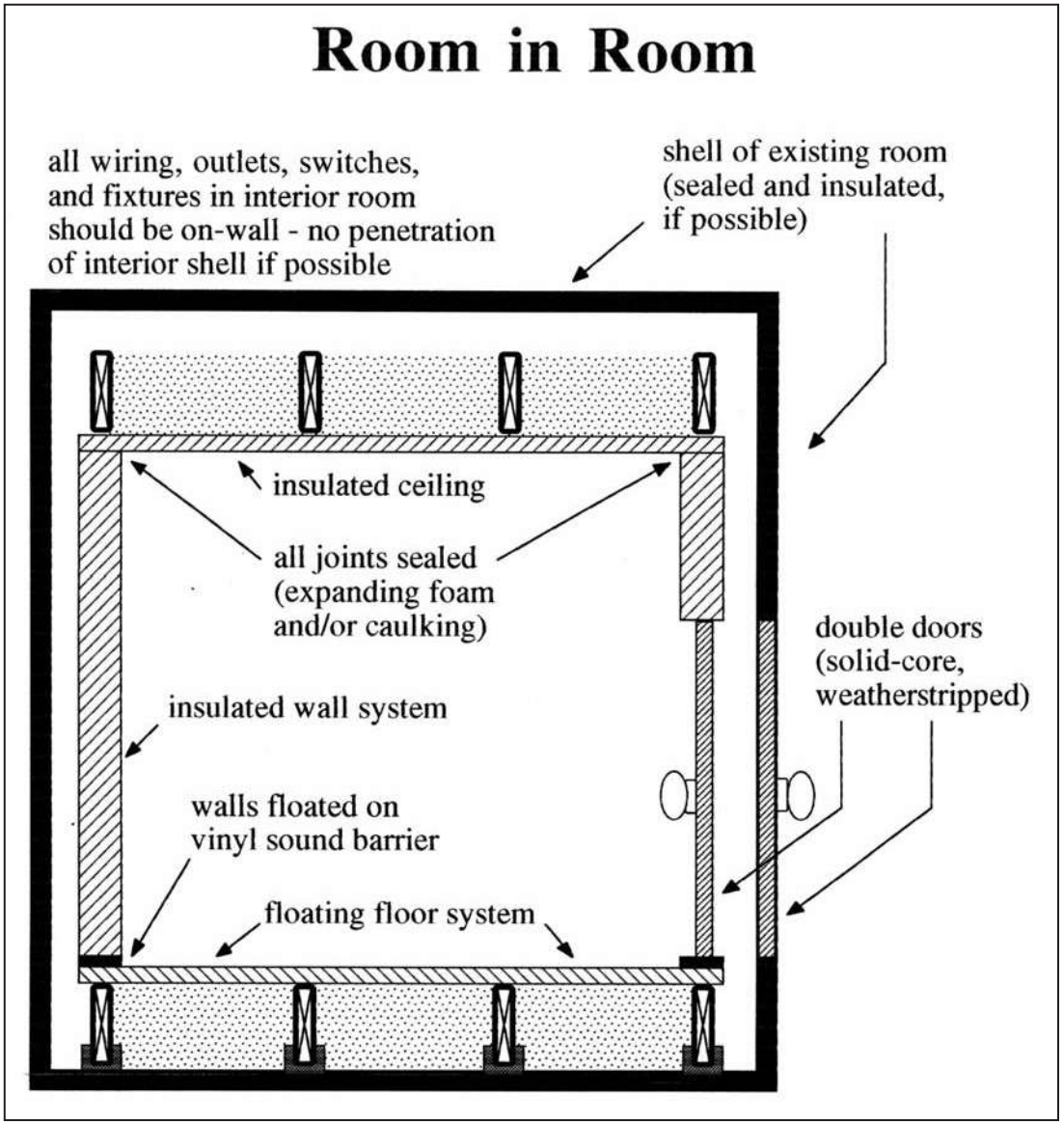
A Practical Guide To Noise Reduction

Part 5: Room Treatment For Optimum Sound

by Mark Parsons

In our previous installments we've focused on how to adapt an existing space, such as a basement, garage, or bedroom, into a sound-controlled environment for practice purposes. But for those of you who seek the ultimate in sound reduction, there's no substitute for the isolated room-within-a-room.

This approach will require starting with a surplus of square footage, ceiling height, time, and money. But the results are about as good as it gets using typical residential construction materials and methods. There aren't really any secrets or special tricks to this method. It's really just a very thorough application of everything we've discussed so far. (Refer back to our previous installments for detailed explanations of the individual processes outlined here.)



To Begin

Start with a room in which all six surfaces (the four walls, the ceiling, and the floor) have been insulated and sealed, and have had additional mass installed. Now, build a floating floor in the room that stops shy of the existing walls by several inches. On this floating floor, build four very efficient walls (insulated/sealed/extra mass added). From these new walls, suspend a new, highly insulated ceiling, with a gap between it and the existing ceiling. At this point you have an insulated, sealed box inside another insulated, sealed box, with several inches of dead air between the two. (And, of course, with no penetrations through the walls for power and light-

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ing, as discussed earlier.)

All that's left is to hang a pair of doors with high STC (sound-reduction) ratings—one for each wall—making sure there is no mechanical connection between them that might transmit sound. Finally, install an isolated and insulated HVAC system to get fresh, temperature-controlled air in without letting sound out.

Voila! You've achieved the gold standard of sound control: the total "room within a room." (See the diagram.)

Oops! One more thing.

Room Treatment

Your room is done and you're ready to 'shed. Time for a pre-flight checklist:

Drumset? Check.

Sticks? Check.

Progressive Independence to work out of? Check.

Acoustic treatment? Huh?

If you forget the last item, there's one more thing you're going to need: earplugs. Because inside of what amounts to a sheetrock box, your drums are going to sound *horrible*—very loud and harsh. And besides being hard on your ears, drums that sound like that aren't very inspiring to play. You didn't do all that work to end up with a room that's no fun to play in, did you? Let's look at some ways to tame that beast.

For rooms that drums are being recorded in, I generally recommend a mix of diffusion, absorption, and reflection that results in a big, warm, ambient sound. The problem is, that sound also requires a big, warm, ambient room. Apply similar treatment to the average bedroom-sized practice space, and you're liable to end up with an overly bright, harsh sound that will fatigue your ears during the course of a long practice session.

In this situation I'd go for a more controlled sound. This means we go heavy on the absorption end of the equation, and we don't try to purposely increase reflections. Besides being easier on your ears, the sort of treatment we're talking about will also slightly reduce the amount of noise escaping the room.

Starting with the floor, we want to avoid hard, reflective flooring in favor of something softer. In other words, pass on the studio-standard oak flooring and go for the thickest carpet and pad you can find. (It's cheaper, too.)

The answer for your walls is convoluted foam (often referred to as "acoustic foam"), which is available from acoustic suppliers. (We're *not* talking about foam mattress pads here. There's a difference.) Acoustic foam generally comes in 2", 3", and 4" thicknesses, with the most important difference being that the thicker the foam the lower into the frequency spectrum it will absorb. Since our primary concern is controlling sonic splatter, for the same money you're better off with a lot of 2" foam versus a little 4" foam.

You can further economize by thoughtful foam placement. You don't have to spring for full coverage (though if you've got the budget, 100% coverage in 4" foam would *certainly* result in a dead room.) If you've got the budget for 50% coverage, for example, you'll get the most bang for your buck by cutting the foam into 24" squares and placing those squares on the walls in a checkerboard pattern.

Ideally you should treat your ceiling the same way. However, don't think you have to treat the whole room at once. Funds may be limited, or you may simply prefer a bit

more bounce to your beat. Do it in increments, and stop when you're happy.

I'd start with the wall directly behind your kit and the ceiling area above. Need more control? Work down one side wall. Now at least no two parallel walls are untreated, which will help reduce the flutter/echo problem. Then, if need be, you can foam the other side, the end wall, and the remainder of the ceiling.

The end result will be a room that is well controlled. A room without harsh cymbal splatter, slapback, and flutters. A room without that cheesy bedroom sound we all know and hate. A room you can play in all day, without causing any pain for you or your neighbors.

Final Thoughts

Sound control is still as much an art as it is a science, and much of it is a matter of degree. There is no magic bullet for noise; you get incremental improvements for incremental expenditures of time, money, and effort. The most important part of the equation is you. You have to analyze your individual situation, and then apply enough of the sound-control techniques we've discussed in this series as are required to keep the peace.

Stay flexible, and remember that an "acceptable" volume level varies greatly with the time of day. The use of the simplest of the techniques we've discussed—if carefully applied—should allow most of us to be able to practice at reasonable levels during reasonable hours. From there, depending on your needs and resources, you can take it as far as you want.

My series of articles over the past five months has dealt largely with theory and general techniques, along with some examples generated from a room conversion that I personally undertook a while ago. Next month, in the final installment, a young British drummer will outline how he did his own homework and converted a very acoustically unfriendly basement environment into a pleasant and viable practice space. It's a real "how I did it" success story that I'm sure you'll enjoy!

Resources

Manufacturers

Acoustic Sciences Corporation
(800) ASC-TUBE, www.acousticsciences.com

Acoustics First
(888) 765-2900, www.acousticsfirst.com

Auralex Acoustics, Inc.
(800) 95-WEDGE, www.auralex.com

Netwell Noise Control
(800) NETWELL, www.asknetwell.com

RPG Diffusion Systems, Inc.
(301) 249-0044, www.rpginc.com

Silent Source
(413) 584-7944, www.silentsource.com

Wenger
(800) 326-8373, www.wengercorp.com

Wiremold
(800) 621-0049. www.wiremold.com

Books

The Master Handbook Of Acoustics
by F. Alton Everest

Building A Recording Studio
by Jeff Cooper

Modern Recording Techniques
by David Miles Huber

Jazz/Rock Pioneers

by Rod Fogarty

In the waning days of the 1960s, before the dinosaurs of psychedelia were felled by the broadsword of corporate rock, there arose in America a new beast: a musical hybrid that would cause controversy and growth not experienced since swing gave way to bop.

Prior to the emergence of this phenomenon, jazz had been jazz and rock had been rock, and whenever the twain had met the result was usually some serious head-butting. But the late '60s saw musicians of all different stripes forming larger bands that featured horn sections. These groups blurred the borders that separated styles in order to create a new music, much of which still sounds fresh and exciting today. And the drummers in these musical juggernauts would prove integral in bringing "pop" music to a higher level.

Bobby Colomby

Drummer and Blood, Sweat & Tears founding member Bobby Colomby was one of the first to pioneer this new and fertile frontier. Bobby was predominantly a jazz drummer with a wealth of technique and a sly wit when phrasing fills. But he was more than adept at rock and R&B styles. Packing tremendous creativity and humor, Bobby could always be relied upon to play the unexpected.

Blood, Sweat & Tears was a nine-piece outfit out of New York City. Under one banner were Juilliard graduates, rock stars, and the cream of the Manhattan jazz scene—all of whom cooperated in a band of unequaled daring and virtuosity. Besides Colomby, other charter players included trumpeter Randy Brecker and former Blues Project members Steve Katz (on guitar) and Al Kooper (on keys and vocals).

BS&T's first album, *Child Is Father To The Man*, featured some undeniably good songs and loads of potential. But it was clearly the work of a band finding its way. However, if their first attempt seemed tentative, their second proved to be a work of collective genius. The

Chicago's Danny Seraphine

eponymously titled effort is generally regarded as the band's masterpiece.

The record opened with orchestral variations on Erik Satie's "3 Gymnopedies" that heralded a gelling of concept and musicality. To paraphrase Forrest Gump's mom, a BS&T arrangement was very much like a box of chocolates. What lay at the center always came as a surprise. Both "Smiling Phases" and "Spinning Wheel" conceal a core of molten jazz within a hard-rocking head.

Colomby comps and plays shots in the tradition of the great big band drummers but in a way so personal that it could never be duplicated. In "Spinning Wheel" he plays one of the hippest and most identifiable one-bar breaks ever.

The impressionistic brush work of "Sometimes In Winter" dissolves into the down-home country honk of "And When I Die." Before long you're immersed in the sophisticated bluesiness of Billie Holliday's "God Bless The Child," featuring a "Manteca"-like call & response between Latin and swing.

Colomby takes a brief but engaging solo on "Blues—Part II," rounding out an album that rivals *Sgt. Pepper* and *Pet Sounds* for sheer invention and historical importance. Though there was much great music to come, no other BS&T release would receive as much critical acclaim or commercial success.

Of the many fine recordings that followed, *Blood, Sweat & Tears 3* and *4* were particularly good. There were also more hits, such as "Hi-De-Ho," "Lucretia MacEvil," and "Go Down Gamblin'."

In a 1995 interview, Colomby reflected, "I would like for the band to be looked at historically in a more favorable way. When I see *Rolling Stone* or other magazines come up with the '100 Best Albums In Pop Music' and we're not mentioned—when I know we had such a profound influence—it's disheartening."

Bobby need not feel disheartened, though. Blood, Sweat & Tears' landmark recordings top the list for all of us who had our ears and intuition tweeked by this groundbreaking ensemble. We revere Bobby Colomby as a singular drummer who inspired us with his playing and directed us toward fresh creative horizons.

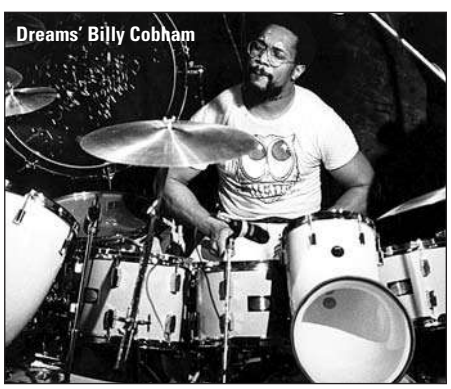
Danny Seraphine

Late summer, 1968. The National Democratic Party Convention in Chicago, Illinois. America's youth takes to the streets of the Windy City in a charged outpouring of social frustration and political distrust. Bristling with that same kinetic energy came the next great band of the new movement.

With extended jams and slightly rough edges, Chicago was everyman's horn band. At the helm of that great, roaring battleship was a drummer of uncommon ability and spirit. Danny Seraphine burst upon the scene with rhythmic concepts that were a siren's song to rock drummers tired of simply "chopping wood."

A drummer from the age of nine, Seraphine was one of the best-schooled players in rock at the time. He had put in the hours with some of the greatest names in teaching. Men such as Bob Tilles, for-

Blood, Sweat & Tears' Bobby Colomby


Dreams' Billy Cobham

The Pioneer Spirit

10 Jazz/Rock Landmarks

Artist	Title	Drummer
Blood, Sweat & Tears	Child Is Father To The Man	Bobby Colomby
Blood, Sweat & Tears	Blood, Sweat & Tears	Bobby Colomby
Blood, Sweat & Tears	Blood, Sweat & Tears 3	Bobby Colomby
Blood, Sweat & Tears	Blood, Sweat & Tears 4	Bobby Colomby
Chicago Transit Authority	Chicago Transit Authority	Danny Seraphine
Chicago	Chicago II	Danny Seraphine
Chicago	Chicago VII	Danny Seraphine
Chase	Chase	Jay Burrid
Chase	Ennea/Pure Music	Jay Burrid, Gary Smith, Tom Gordon
Dreams	Dreams	Billy Cobham

mer Woody Herman ace Chuck Flores, and drumming icon Jo Jones filled and refilled his cup of knowledge.

Chicago was a prime example of that rarest of birds: a truly fine group of musicians who found mass public appeal *and* critical acceptance. It is no exaggeration to say that Chicago was for many years one of the most popular bands in America. Though they still record and tour today (with the talented Tris Imboden on drums), it's their late-'60s through '70s output that remains required listening for all serious students of music.

"Bobby Colomby was really great. He was the first drummer I heard that made some kind of transition from jazz to rock and put the two together."

—Buddy Rich, 1980

Chicago Transit Authority (as they were first known, until the bus company of the same name threatened to sue) released their debut album in 1969. It was a time when young people were accustomed to hearing various styles of music combined and contrasted on their local FM radio stations. Offering everything from acid-rock funkifizing to overtly jazz-inspired improvisation, Chicago's collection did not disappoint. Tucked away here and there, like treasures to be unearthed, are a few perfect little radio-friendly songs.

Chicago's broad appeal embraced the young and the young at heart. Older listeners, raised on the big band sounds of the 1940s, found a comfortable middle ground in musically turbulent times. As a result, the band got a great deal of AM radio play. Top-10 hits when originally released, these recordings have gone on to become classics. Much of this success is due to Danny Seraphine's gift for creating an original and perfect drum part for each song.

Listen to "25 Or 6 To 4." Seraphine lays down one of rock drumming's catchiest grooves. As arresting as it is straightforward, it propels the other musicians to frenetic heights. (The song also has an infectious bass guitar line that your blue-haired granny probably knows how to play.)

"Make Me Smile" is where the big band and the rock group collide head on. Sporting horn voicings and a rhythmic force that would soon be in evidence in the writing for the Woody Herman and Buddy Rich orchestras of the day, this one cooks. Seraphine's energetic fills are equal measures of fire and precision.

"Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?" swings with an odd meter intro and settles into a 4/4 shuffle that sits right in the pocket. Danny had that shuffle down.

An outstanding example of Danny's versatility as a player can be found on the first three cuts of 1974's *Chicago VII*. (Seraphine composed or co-composed all three.) The musical voyage begins with "Prelude To Aire," an Afro-Cuban naningo built slowly yet deliberately in layers of congas and toms. Walt Parazaider's flute enters insistently for some tribal exchanges that put one in mind of Art Blakey's late-'50s collaborations with Herbie Mann.

"Aire" moves like the current of a stream, and Seraphine establishes a rhythm that's as smooth as polished stone. The first time that I heard it—as a younger, less experienced drummer—I thought it was in straight time. That belief came to dust as I tried to play along and kept coming up short. Yup. It's definitely in seven. (What can I tell you? I wasn't a real bright kid.)

Riding in on a Coltrane-esque introduction, "Devil's Sweet" rains sheets of dissonance that clear to reveal a tune as dark and moody as a city block after midnight. Listeners are treated to an under-documented aspect of Danny Seraphine's mastery of the drums: Perhaps as a tip of the hat, soul-wise, to Papa Jo, Danny plays the brushes. In tremendously artistic fashion, he shows all of the passion and control one associates with the greats of jazz. Always playing with his ears wide open, his way with dynamics is enviable. Hearing this trilogy always leaves me wondering what he must be playing now.

The Drummers Of Chase

Bill Chase spent most of the 1960s as first trumpet in one of Woody Herman's finest Herds. But in 1970 Bill had an idea: He wanted to present the bold impact of a big-band trumpet section supported by a more contemporary rhythmic structure. The group he formed took his name, and their brassy sounds cut straight to the marrow. In a career tragically cut short, Chase (the band) turned out three LPs that have recently resurfaced in compact disk form. Aside from the odd carryover track, each album rocked to a different drummer.

The group's debut effort, simply titled *Chase*, spawned the hit single "Get It On" and featured the drumming of Jay Burrid. Burrid's playing brimmed with power, finesse, and great ideas. Though the drummer had strong roots in rock, he had also worked with jazz giants Bill Evans, Benny Golson, and Clark Terry.

Admired for their extended and intricately arranged pieces, Chase here offers "Invitation To A River." Transported to a bullring in old Madrid via a Spanish-tinged trumpet fanfare, the listener surfs the ebb and flow of Burrid's timpani-like tom rolls. As the rhythm melts into a medium swing, his ride pattern simmers, pushes, and prods, inspiring everyone to play over their heads. You can practically hear the gears turning as Burrid gives deep thought to every note he plays. His grace on the instrument was unparalleled.

Though Burrid appears on two cuts, follow-up LP *Ennea* belongs to Gary Smith. Smith had chops 'til next Tuesday and an

in-your-face, funk-rooted approach.

After bowling the listener over with a supercharged rendition of Stephen Foster's "Swanee River," Chase burns through song after song before arriving at the album's centerpiece. "Ennea Suite" presents six musical biographs, each dedicated to a figure from Greek mythology. The level of intensity rarely lets up, and Gary Smith's playing must be heard to be believed. From the up-tempo jazz waltz of "Zeus" to the rapid-fire funk of "Hades," Smith is awe-inspiring. He double-clutches the band through twists and turns as hair-raising as any Ozark mountain pass. Adventurous and strong…as fluid as a tap left running…rolls as smooth as distant thunder—Gary Smith had the goods.

If *Pure Music* seems incomplete, that's because it is. Production on the album had begun in late spring of 1974. Before recording was to resume, Chase went out to play what was to be a brief tour. Fully half of the band was killed when their small chartered plane crashed into a farmer's field. Among the dead was Bill Chase.

Released posthumously (it's now available on a two-fer CD with *Ennea*), *Pure Music* gave strong evidence that Chase had been eschewing pop songs in favor of more fusion-oriented instrumentals. Drummer Tom Gordon, though totally conversant with the vocabulary of modern music in the 1970s, shows that he was very much his own man behind the set. At once technical and economical, Gordon was an exceptionally musical drummer. In the space of six tracks he flawlessly executes linear funk and progressive rock patterns, as well as playing cool and spacious odd time.

Billy Cobham

It's a sad fact that world-class artists can sometimes vanish from the world stage. But a man still highly visible on that stage is Billy Cobham. Though he has led his own band for some years now, in 1970 Cobham belonged to a collective known as Dreams. At various times featuring Randy and Michael Brecker, the late Don Grolnick, and ECMer John Abercrombie, Dreams was a scary bunch.

It was common practice for the players in Dreams to improvise around the arrangements. This kind of risk-taking was right up Cobham's alley. Constantly playing in the moment, he was steering the bus all the way.

The band lasted only long enough to release two fine albums. On *Dreams*, ideas spill out in cornucopic fashion. Cobham is never less than inspired, whether tying the other musicians into a tight groove or stretching out a bit, as he does on "Dream Suite." There's that incredible single-stroke roll, ubiquitous and splendid. And on "New York" Billy displays his effortless technique on an extended drum solo. This recording presents Billy Cobham in a setting unlike any other. It's well worth some digging at a used record shop.

The next Dreams album, *Imagine My Surprise*, was produced by former Booker T. & The MG's guitarist Steve Cropper. Though it's not as adventurous as the first record, Cobham finds numerous opportunities to catch fire. A case in point is the completely spontaneous tag ending of the title tune. Buoyed by Billy's cooking samba, Dreams chases their swan song to a close.

With Billy Cobham, the link to the new era would seem complete. The master drummer eventually left Dreams to join The Mahavishnu Orchestra, the mother of all fusion bands. And so the next phase began.

To those unfamiliar with early jazz/rock, happy listening. The rest of us will pull out our practice pads and extend a silent nod of thanks to the bands of that not-so-quiet revolution, and the drummers who made them go.

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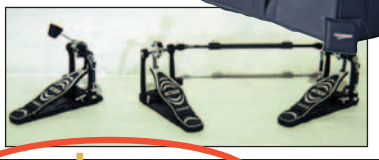

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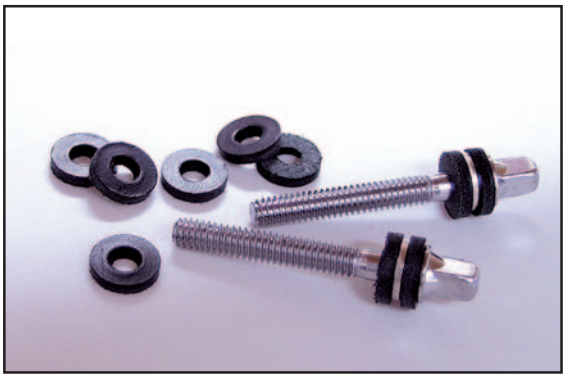

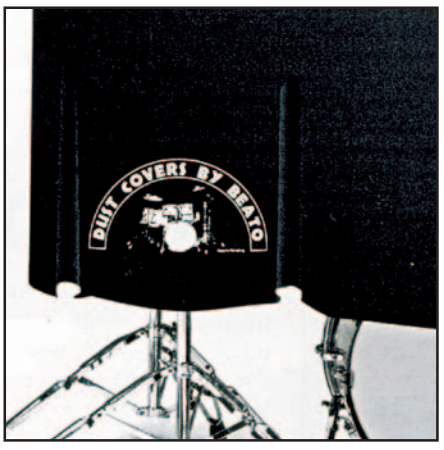

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Jeff Ocheltree

Teching For John Bonham

by Billy Amendola

Back in the day, the only thing that roadies were expected to do was…well, just be there. Sure, they had to carry and set up the equipment. But one of their main gigs was being a buddy to the stars. Talk about your unsung heroes.

Jeff Ocheltree took his experience as a roadie and turned it into something more: becoming one of the first individuals to legitimately lay claim to the title of "drum tech." Eventually Jeff took things even further, applying his accumulated knowledge to the creation of fine custom drums. (Jeff's latest endeavor is Paiste's new signature timbales, along with his Phantom Steel drumkits and snares, and Spirit Of 2002 snares and drumkits.)

Prior to becoming a drum builder, Jeff teched for many top drummers, including Billy Cobham (with The Mahavishnu Orchestra and solo) and Led Zeppelin's John Bonham. Today he's still out there, working with Steve Smith.

"Everyone thinks of John as a basher, but he was far from it. He could make the drums sound loud without hitting them hard. He knew how to hit them. He knew where to hit that sweet spot."

Not long ago, I attended a Paiste reception where I had the pleasure of speaking with Jeff about his experiences with Bonzo. Here's a rare opportunity to take a look back at some wild and crazy times with one of rock's greatest drummers.

MD: How did you meet John?

Jeff: I met John after The Mahavishnu Orchestra broke up. It was 1974, and I was on the road with Billy Cobham's new band. They were playing at the Crystal Palace Bowl Party, in London. It was an outdoor gig in a band shell with a pond in front of it. The reason that sticks in my mind is because two things happened that day. In the pond there was a hydraulic lift for the lead singer in the band Cockney Rebel. He was supposed to walk off the stage and onto this platform that would raise and lower him in the water. But the thing malfunctioned, and when he walked off stage it was lower than he thought, and it went down quicker than it was supposed to. He almost tripped and fell into the water, while holding onto a microphone!

The other reason I remember the place is that someone came up to me and said, "John Bonham wants to talk to you. He's in that tent over there." When I went over to the tent, John greeted me with, "Come over here. Anyone who can roadie for that guy deserves a beer." [laughs] So we talked and had a few beers. That was the first time we hung out and exchanged sarcasms. From then on we had a nice relationship.

MD: Was Zeppelin on the bill for that gig?

Jeff: No, John was there to see Billy, Liberty DeVitto, and Carmine Appice. From that day on I would see him when Zeppelin came to LA to play or record, or just to hang out. They'd always go to the Rainbow Bar & Grill, which was right next to the Roxy on Sunset Blvd. That's where all the roadies and artists would hang. I remember one time I was hanging with John and this guy jumped off a table right onto my back. So I threw him about twenty feet in the air. John turned to me and said, "I think he'll think twice about that the next time. I hope you didn't hurt him." So then the guy came up to me and said, "I'm really sorry, I didn't know it was you." I said, "You don't even know who I am." Then I realized that it was Keith Moon. I was like, Oh! Moonie, you're up to your old crap. [laughs]

Later, in 1975, John was back in Los Angeles. He had a broken wrist at the time and was relaxing at the Beverly Hilton hotel. We were hanging out at the Rainbow one night. I told him about a custom Gretsch 6" snare drum that I had I reworked, with cable snares on it. I wanted him to check it out, even though I knew he was totally into his Ludwig drums. He had no interest in the snare, but he was intrigued by the fact that I worked on it. The next day he invited me to his hotel room and asked me if I wanted to work with Zeppelin. Even though I knew John was a great player, I didn't have any interest at the time. I was happy working for Billy.

MD: You were being loyal to Billy.

Jeff: Absolutely. That was one of the most incredible experiences of my life. I learned so much from Billy. Back then there were no experienced drum techs to learn from. Everything was trial and error. My tuning skills became better with each tour, because Billy let me go with it. He knew my ears would get better and better.

We were doing things back then that no one else was doing. We would carry our own microphones and tools. It meant a lot to us to get the best possible drum sound we could get. John watched me tune Billy's drums once, and he thought it was funny that a drummer would need someone to tune his drums. But he appreciated the fact that someone was taking such care. He saw that I cared for the instrument. I would check for cracks, see what was loose—things like that. John liked this.

MD: When did you actually start working with John?

Jeff: I started with John in early 1977. I did some work on the *Physical Graffiti* record while I was in England. In 1979, I did the *In Through The Out Door* tour. I went to Sweden for just a little of the recording. Back then the roadies were not a big part of the Zeppelin recording process. I worked mostly on live shows.

Mick Hinton was John's main roadie. John would always have adjoining rooms with Mick when Zeppelin was on tour. Back then—no disrespect to the English roadies—but they weren't really looked upon as the roadies in America were. Here we worked a little harder to perfect the craft. They were there to take care of the drummer. They were usually good buddies. Loyalty was much more important than honing your skills.

MD: What would you talk about when you and John would hang?

Jeff: It was incredible to talk with him one-on-one about drums and drummers. I mean, every night he dazzled me with his playing—but the best experiences were the few times I hung out with him in his music room. We'd listen to records together and he'd share his thoughts and opinions. It was very educational. He had an extensive record collection with all kinds of music—blues, folk, rock, fusion. He listened to everything. He was especially into jazz. It was his favorite.

John was a rock drummer, but he could swing. He really liked Max Roach and Elvin Jones. He was also into Clyde Stubblefield and Motown. John loved to talk drums, but no one would talk to him about it. The press would just see the rock star. It used to make him mad and crazy. No one asked him about his influences or his technical ability—like playing his bass drum heel to toe. He played both styles, but mostly heel up. His influ-

John bustin' a groove at home in his practice room

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Teching For Bonham

ences were a lot more sophisticated than people knew.

MD: Did John practice?

Jeff: He did. But he was very discreet about it. John was self-motivated and self-taught. He'd try things he would hear on the radio and on different recordings—like Latin or Cuban music. Steve Smith and I heard a DAT recording once of him practicing the "Moby Dick" solo, and Steve pointed out to me that it had the vibe to the Max Roach song "The Drum Also Waltzes." That doesn't surprise me, because I know how much John was into Max's playing.

MD: Did you work on John's drums before a show?

Jeff: John didn't like anyone touching or fooling around with his kit, especially when they recorded. In the studio, I was there to set it up—and then get out of the way. Before a show, he would check the bottom heads to make sure I didn't screw them up. [laughs] If he let me tune them, he *always* checked my tuning. He liked to do it himself. He would tune to his ears—and John had *great* ears. He was very knowledgeable about how the drums should sound. Everyone thinks of him as a basher, but he was far from it. He had great technical ability. He could make the drums sound loud without hitting them hard. He knew *how* to hit them. He knew *where* to hit that sweet spot.

Back in those days, roadies didn't really work on the equipment, at least not like today. You never really knew if you were appreciated. I *think* John appreciated me, but it's hard to know because we never got the recognition. John had a good heart, though. He gave me a silver sparkle kit he used on some recordings. But working for Zeppelin was kind of stressful. [Manager] Peter Grant was very tough. At times it could get crazy. Not many people will talk about those days.

MD: Tell us about John's kit.

Jeff: John had the Ludwig stainless-steel kit, with coated Emperor heads. His amber Vistalite [acrylic] kit had Black Dot heads, which were made by Ludwig, then later by Remo. He never used either of those kits in the studio, though. For recording he always used a Ludwig wood kit with Ambassadors or sometimes coated Emperor heads. He generally used a Supraphonic $6\frac{1}{2}$" steel snare, although he did use a $6\frac{1}{2}$" Black Beauty on some cuts. John had a stubbornness about his snare drums. We would scratch his initials on the inside to see if they were brass or not, because he hated the sound of brass. He would say, "Not enough brightness to it."

The tuning of the toms' bottom heads was very important to John. He tuned them much higher than one would think. He would say, "The air moves from the batter head to the bottom head; how the hell does it do that if you have it tuned down so low you can't hear it?" John liked both heads on his bass drum, and he generally miked it from the front and the back. Sometimes he used a felt strip on the bass drum, but not usually. I don't know where the rumor about the aluminum foil in the bass drum came from. One time he gave his first natural-wood drumkit to his brother-in-law, who later gave it to Paul Thompson of Roxy Music. Paul still owns that kit. Paul and I were working together, and I took off the bass drum head and there was shredded newspaper inside it. I never saw aluminum foil, though.

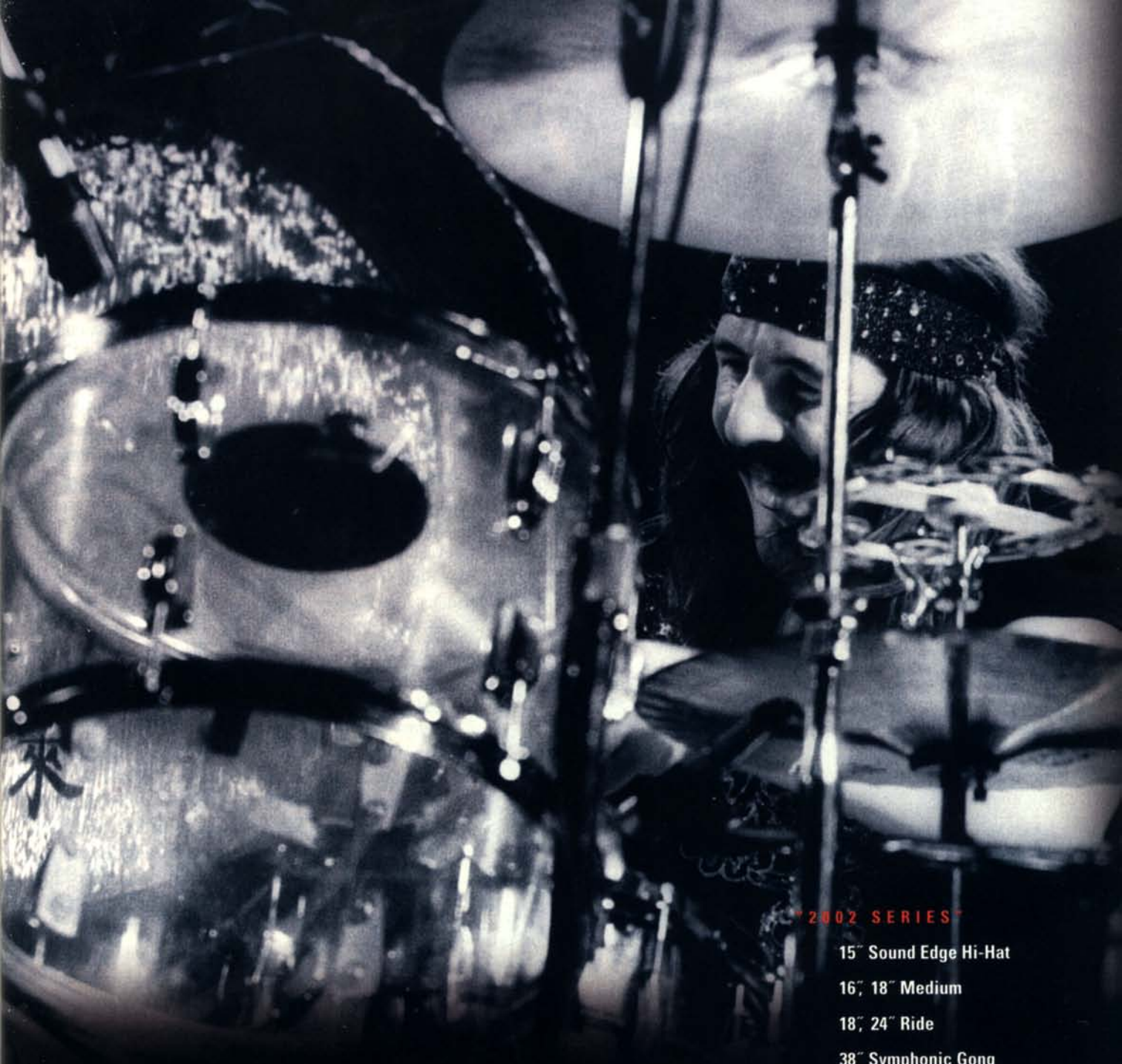
John used a Ludwig Speed King pedal. Also, the idea of using big drums wasn't to impress or outdo anyone. It was because he knew those big drums would tune well and cut through. And of course he used all Paiste cymbals.

MD: What kind of mic's were on the drums?

Jeff: Live, it was Shure Professional Series mic's. They were equivalent to today's SM-57s, but this was before Shure used numbers for their model designations. In the studio it varied—C12s, RE 20s. Sometimes John close-miked the snare and hi-hat, but a lot of the recorded sound was from the overheads, getting the room sound.

MD: Any final thoughts?

Jeff: I'll tell you one last story. John was living on his family farm in a little village in England, outside of Birmingham. He wanted to build a stone barn behind his farmhouse. Instead of bringing someone in to build this thing, John and his dad, who was a mason, literally brought in stone with wagons and built this beautiful stone barn all by themselves. He wanted to do it himself. I really liked that about John. He was larger than life. I wish we could have had more conversations. We never got to talk about the old days, and that I regret. But I worked hard to get good at what I do, and I'm thankful that my role became a little more than just taking his drums in and out of their cases.



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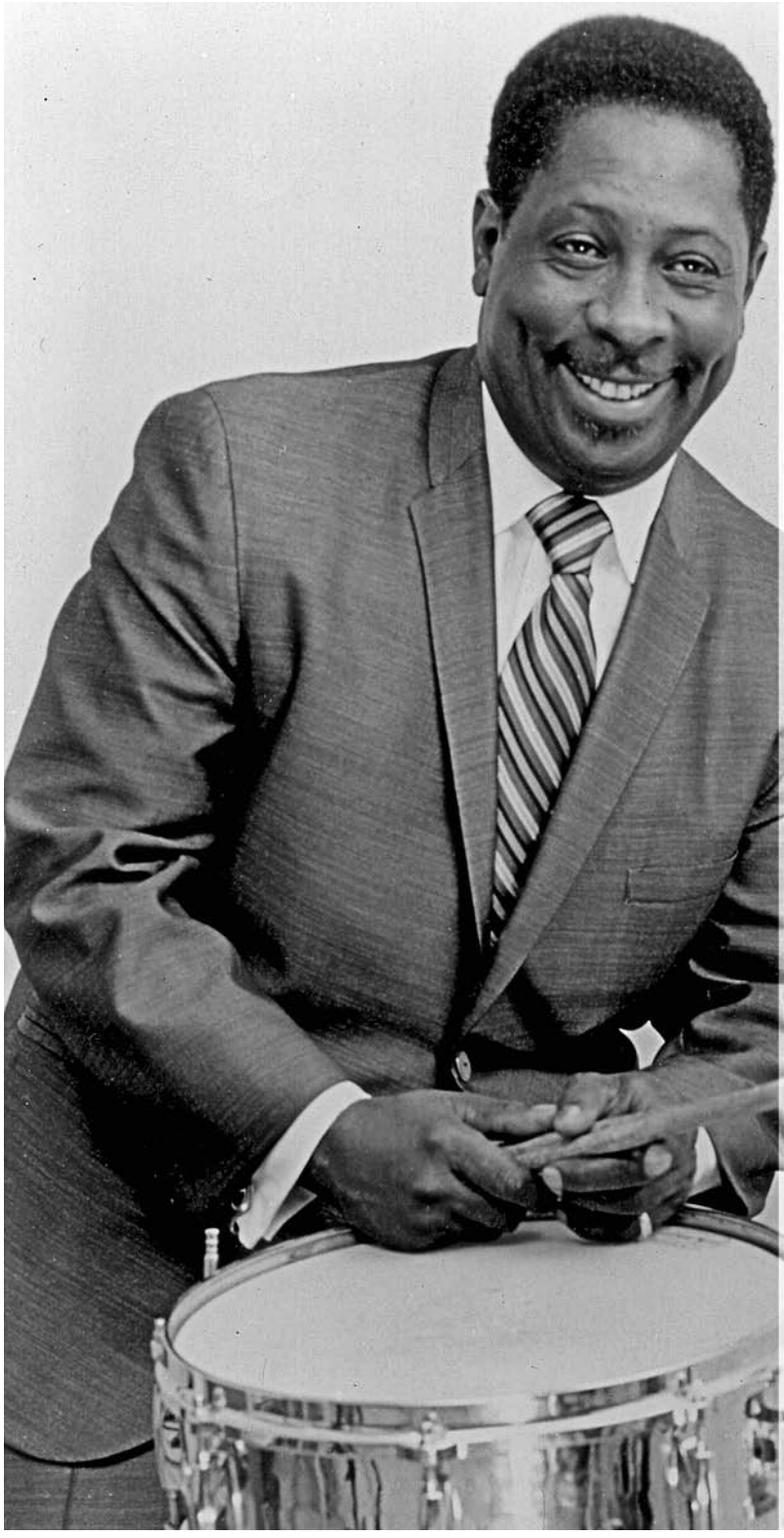
Panama Francis



David Albert "Panama" Francis, who made his mark as a big band and rock 'n' roll drummer during a career that spanned more than sixty years, died on November 11, 2001. He was eighty-two.

During the swing era, Francis powered the bands of Willie Bryant, Lucky Milinder, Cab Calloway, and Roy Eldridge. It was Eldridge who gave Francis his moniker, when the young drummer was subbing for Sid Catlett in Eldridge's band. Roy couldn't remember the drummer's name, so he looked at the wide-brimmed hat that Francis was wearing and said, "Hey, Panama!"

In the 1950s Francis launched a second career, becoming known as *the* rock 'n' roll drummer. He recorded with such artists as Buddy Holly, Bobby Darin, The Four Seasons, The Coasters, Della Reese, Neil Sedaka, the Platters, Frankie Avalon, Connie Francis, Jackie Wilson, and James Brown. He also recorded with vocalists ranging from Wayne Newton and Johnny Mathis to Ray Charles, Tony Bennett, and Sarah Vaughan.

Panama also played in several television orchestras, including those on the Ed Sullivan, Jackie Gleason, and Dinah Shore shows. In the 1970s he returned to jazz, playing the festival circuit with groups that re-created the swing-era music he preferred. He worked with leaders like Lionel Hampton, Illinois Jacquet, and Earl Hines.

Eventually Francis came back to the sounds of his youth: jazz music rooted in danceable swing. His philosophy was, "If you can't dance to it, it's not jazz." To promote the music he loved, in 1979 Panama formed the Savoy Sultans, a "small big band" dedicated to straight-ahead swing music. They enjoyed an eight-year stand at Manhattan's famous Rainbow Room, and toured jazz festivals in America and Europe. The band also recorded on the Stash label, earning Grammy nominations for two of their six albums.

In a March 1987 interview in *Modern Drummer*, Panama commented, "During the big band days, they used to say that a band was no better than its drummer. The drummer is supposed to take charge; he's the boss. Back then, drummers took pride in the way they made the band swing. That was the job!"

Panama continued working with the Savoy Sultans and other artists until 1996, when he was forced to retire due to illness.

Rick Van Horn

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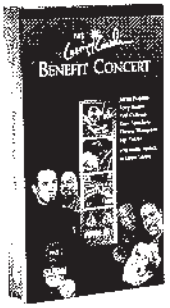

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PASIC 2001

Percussionists Beat Terrorists

While no one can deny that it's been a scary time in the world, all of the mayhem (including the crash of American Airlines flight 587 a mere two days earlier) couldn't deter drummers and percussionists from heading to Nashville, Tennessee this past November 14–17 for PASIC 2001. Over 5,600 people attended the annual percussion convention. A *record* number of exhibitors—ranging from most of the big drum, cymbal, head, and stick manufacturers and publishers down to smaller mom & pop operations—were also on hand supporting the drumming community and displaying their wares.

Over the course of four days, PASIC showcased some incredible talent from just about every area of percussion. Orchestral, marching, drumset, contemporary, and electronic ("Wired For Percussion" was a theme of the show) topics were all covered by various celeb artists in master-class, panel discussion, clinic, and concert settings. Some of the percussion heavy hitters on board included Keiko Abe, Tony Cirone, Gordon Peters, Alan Abel, Mitch Markovich, Trichy Sankaran, Gordon Stout, Tim Adams, Kalani, and about *thirty* others.

Akira Jimbo performs before a packed house at PASIC 2001.

One of the best ideas of the show for the legit percussionist was the "Orchestral Lab." Each day anyone could walk into the "lab" and have their playing—snare drum rolls, tambourine technique, cymbal crashes, timpani chops—evaluated by a big-name performer or educator.

As for fans of drumset playing, they were treated to some fine performances. Here are a few highlights.

Describing his drumset as the "acoustic machine," stick trickster **Johnny Rabb** displayed a light touch as he played through a bevy of jungle/drum 'n' bass grooves incorporating ribbed sticks and effects cymbals. Rabb's "Freehand Technique," which gives him the ability to play one-handed rolls incorporating the rim of a drum, was impressive.

One of the highlights of the convention was jazz drummer **Matt Wilson**'s excellent masterclass on improvisation. His delivery was lighthearted, but the points he made were serious as he opened up a lot of minds to the important elements of improv.

Drummer **Robbie Ameen**, conguero **Richie Flores**, and timbalero **Robert Vilera** practically burned the place down with some incendiary Afro-Cuban playing. All three are masters of their instruments, and the interplay was inspiring.

Opening with a beautiful solo based on Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance," **Lewis Nash** proved why he

is one of the most-recorded jazz drummers in recent times. His beautiful brushwork and deft touch with sticks on drums and cymbals are the epitome of taste.

Drum stars (and Zappa alumni) **Terry Bozzio** and **Chad Wackerman** gave an interesting performance that had the two men playing together (including a duet of the famed "Black Page" solo) as well as individually. It was especially fascinating to see the roles they played when performing together, with Terry dictating the moment and Chad tastefully supporting and adding counterpoint.

Prince's **John Blackwell** gave a fun and informal clinic that showed him soloing in a fusion style, playing some hip-hop–inspired grooves, and incorporating his own brand of over-the-top stick twirls. (He clearly explained his moves—sort of a glorified baton twirl.) Blackwell then brought out percussionist Taku Hirano—and called veteran Ndugu Chancler out of the audience—for a three-way rhythmic excursion.

Filling in for the Blade Brothers (Brian and Blady), who cancelled at the last minute, **Gregg Bissonette** gave a solid clinic that was musically inspiring. (His impressive opening solo, which covered a myriad of styles, garnered a standing ovation.) Gregg was also very open with tips about the business: "Attitude is so important. You need to be persistent to make it, but be *politely* persistent."

Like some mad scientist experimenting with complex theories, **Mike Mangini** uses his highly developed technical ability and mathematical understanding to explore advanced rhythmic concepts. Putting it simply, his clinic was a mind-bender. Mangini is also leading the field in terms of true four-way independence, seemingly able to lead from either side of his body.

The groovalicious **Stanton Moore** gave a very educational and inspiring master class on traditional New Orleans beats and how he incorporates them in a contemporary setting.

Robert Vilera, Richie Flores, Robbie Ameen

Stanton Moore

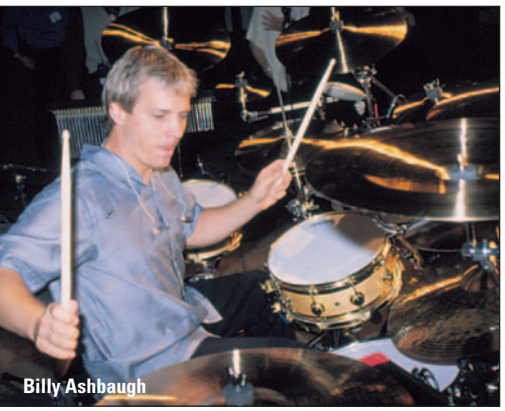
Mike Mangini

John Blackwell

Kenny Aronoff

Johnny Rabb

Chester Thompson


Billy Ashbaugh

Liberty DeVitto

Matt Wilson

Lewis Nash

The full house was totally digging Stanton's uniquely funky approach and light touch.

Nobody plays louder—or grooves harder—than **Kenny Aronoff**, and he proved it at PASIC 2001 by playing along to several tracks he's recorded recently. Kenny's bigger-than-life personality shined through his performance, really connecting with the audience. And his rap about studio work was very informative.

'N Sync's **Billy Ashbaugh** is a very talented player who adds a lot of fire and intricacy to the boy band's music. While playing along to several tracks ('N Sync and original tunes), Ashbaugh revealed some involved patterns and nice double pedal technique, showing how creative a player can be in a pop context.

Being able to witness the artistry of **Rick Marotta** in person was a treat. The studio legend's clinic featured him "in concert" with big-time bassist Will Lee and guitarist Ross Bolton, performing all sorts of groovy covers (including a couple of Steely Dan tunes that Marotta originally cut with the band back in the day). It was obvious to everyone in the room why this man is on a bazillion records.

Performing on his trademark huge double bass kit, fusion/jazz/rock great **Chester Thompson** dueted with percussionist **Glen Caruba**. Going far beyond just jamming, the two men played a couple of lengthy and very tight pieces. Chester played brilliantly, laying down some African-flavored tribal grooves and playing an extended solo that was both technically and musically inspiring.

"I think of myself as an extension of the songwriter; I play for the lyrics." So said Billy Joel's **Liberty DeVitto** at his PASIC performance. DeVitto offered many real-world pointers for being a successful working drummer, and his delivery was so much fun that the audience seemingly spent most of the time laughing. Maybe Liberty should consider moonlighting as a stand-up comic.

A massive crowd turned out to see the final artist of the event, **Akira**

Gregg Bissonette

Rick Marotta

Terry Bozzio and Chad Wackerman

Jimbo. Akira's stunning technical prowess, mastery of many styles, and trademark ability to perform complete musical compositions (even a *James Bond* medley) using electronic triggers and pads placed around his acoustic kit seemed the perfect act to cap PASIC 2001.

Other noteworthy drumset events featured great players like Paul Leim (whose master class was packed), Tony Verderosa, Clayton Cameron, Yoron Israel, Tommy Wells & Jerry Kroon, and Brian Fullen. And one of the particularly fun moments at PASIC went down during Nexus's thirtieth-anniversary concert, when Peter Erskine joined the percussion group on stage for some tasty musical interplay.

The Percussive Arts Society also inducted a few percussion giants into its Hall Of Fame at PASIC 2001. Joe Calato (inventor of the nylon-tipped drumstick and the retractable brush, and the founder of Regal Tip sticks), Mel Lewis (famed big band drummer), Babatunde Olatunji (African drumming legend), Al Payson (long-time master percussionist with the Chicago Symphony), and Tito Puente (Latin music star and mighty timbalero) were all recognized for their immense contribution to our art form.

Drummers and percussionists scared off by terrorist threats? No way. PASIC 2002 will be held without fail in Columbus, Ohio, November 13–16. For more info, contact the Percussive Arts Society at (580) 353-1455, or go to www.pas.org.

Story by William F. Miller
Photos by Rick Malkin

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Quick Beats

Bernard Purdie (Studio Legend)

What are some of your favorite grooves?
Steve Gadd on "50 Ways To Leave Your Lover" (Paul Simon), Dave Garibaldi on "Oakland Stroke" (Tower Of Power), and Jeff Porcaro on "Rosanna" (Toto).

What are some of your favorite grooves that *you've* recorded?
Aretha Franklin's "Until You Come Back To Me" and "Rock Steady," Steely Dan's "Green Earrings," "Home At Last," "Deacon Blues," and "Haitian Divorce," and Hall & Oates' "She's Gone."

What books did you study when you first started playing?
Haskell Harr's *Book 1*, Ted Reed's *Syncopation*, and books by Jim Chapin.

You've done so much in your career. Are there any songs you would like to have played on?
Anything by The Doobie Brothers when Michael McDonald was in the band.

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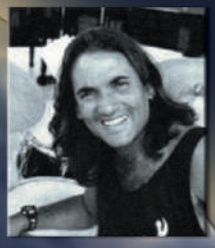

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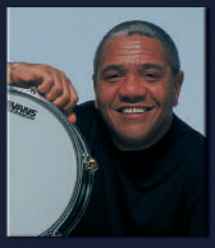

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ClearSonic	www.clearsonic.com	12
Columbus Percussion	www.columbuspercussion.com	98
Concord Records Inc.	www.concordrecords.com	121,156
D'Amico Drums	www.damicodrums.com	155
Doug Tann	www.dreamwater.net/dougtann	155
Drum Center of Lexington		139
Drum Perfect	www.drumperfect.com	135
Drum Solo	www.drumsolo.cc	155
Drum Supply House	www.drummaker.com	156
Drum Workshop (DW)	www.dwdrums.com	88,89
Drum World	www.drumworld.com	68
Drumat	www.drumat.com	130
DrumDial	www.bigbangdist.com	18
Drumfun Incorporated	www.drumfun.com	139
Drums In The Wind	www.wwandbw.com	151
Drums On Sale		130
Evans	www.evansdrumheads.com	1
Everyone's Drumming	www.everyonesdrumming.com	139
Vic Firth	www.vicfirth.com	2,109
Fork's Drum Closet	www.forksdrumcloset.com	92
Gibraltar	www.kamanmusic.com	9, 28
GK Music Inc.	www.gk-music.com	18
Gretsch	www.kamanmusic.com	CV3
HardWear Inc.	www.bigbangdist.com	102
Hart Dynamics	www.hartdynamics.com	68
HQ Percussion	www.HQpercussion.com	80
Hudson Music	www.hudsonmusic.com	21
Humes & Berg	www.humes-berg.com	95
Inside Out Music	www.insideoutmusic.com	134
Interstate	www.interstatemusic.com	70
Istanbul Agop Cymbals	www.istanbulcymbals.com	20
Istanbul Mehmet Cymbals	www.istanbulmehmet.com	11
Joe Morello		155
KOSA	www.kosamusic.com	108
Latin Percussion (LP)	www.lpmusic.com	91
Long Island Drum Center	www.lidrum.com	108
Los Angeles Music Academy	www.lamusicacademy.com	135
Ludwig	www.ludwig-drums.com	CV2
Magna Carta Records	www.magnacarta.net	70
Mapex	www.mapexdrums.com	67
Matt's Music Center	www.mattsmusic.com	135
Mayer Bros. Drums	www.mbdrums.com	130
Meinl	www.meinl.de	13,15
Memphis Drum Shop	www.memphisdrumshop.com	135
Metropad	www.educationalmusicaccessories.com	130
Midwest Percussion	www.midwestpercussion.com	79
MRP Drums	www.mrpdrums.com	19
MusiCares Foundation	www.grammy.com	129
Musician's Friend	www.musiciansfriend.com	94
MusicLoversAuction.com	www.musicloversauction.com	135
Musictech College	www.musictech.com	78
NYPT	www.protoolsny.com	156
Pacific Drums & Percussion	www.pacificdrums.com	125
Paiste America	www.paiste.com	3,145
Peace Drums	www.peacemusic.com.tw	82,93
Pearl	www.pearldrum.com	6/7,97
Percussive Arts Society (PAS)	www.pas.org	117
Pork Pie Percussion	www.porkpiedrums.com	130
Precision Drum Co.	www.precisiondrum.com	135
Pro•Mark	www.promark-stix.com	29,57,116,133
Professional Music Studio		156
Protection Racket Cases	www.protectionracket.com	71
PureSound Percussion	www.puresoundpercussion.com	12
Remo	www.remo.com	55
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RTOM/Moongel	www.rtom.com	135
Rupp's Drums	www.ruppsdrums.com	155
Sabian	www.sabian.com	36/37,103
Sam Ash Music	www.samash.com	144
Sam Barnard's Drum Wrap	www.sambarnard.net	156
Samson (Slicknut)	www.slicknut.com	130
Shure Brothers	www.shure.com	101
Sonor Drums	www.hohnerusa.com	87
TA Drums	www.tadrums.com	139
Talent 2000	www.talent2k.com/	155
Tama	www.tama.com	48/49
Taye Drums	www.taye.com	113
The Drum Pad	www.thedrumpad.com	139
Toca	www.kamanmusic.com	131
Treeworks	www.treeworkschimes.com	69
Trick Percussion	www.trickdrums.com	139
Turkish Cymbals	www.turkishcymbals.com	66
Vater Percussion	www.vater.com	27,99,155
Virtual Drummer School	www.virtualdrummerschool.com	157
Warner Bros. Publications	www.warnerbrospublications.com	123
West L.A. Music	www.westlamusic.com	20
Wright Hand Drum Co.	www.wrighthanddrums.com	155
Wuhan	www.universalpercussion.com	98
Yamaha	www.yamahadrums.com	28
Zildjian	www.zildjian.com	16,17,81, CV4
Zoro	www.zorothedrummer.com	135

When Gene Dunn of Medford, New Jersey got into drumming in 1970, Ludwig Vistalites were all the rage. (See "In The Clear," on page 84.) But they cost more than the beginning drummer's parents were willing to spend. As Gene got a little older, John Bonham became a major influence—providing another Vistalite incentive.

As soon as Gene could afford it himself, he bought a red Vistalite kit. One thing led to another, and today the twenty-five-piece kit includes twin 14x22 bass drums, 12", 13", 14", and 15" mounted toms, 6", 8", 10", 12", 13", 14", 16", and 18" concert toms, 16" and 18" floor toms, four high and four low "Octobans" (made by Gene himself), and a 6x14 snare drum. The ride cymbal is a 22" red (natch!) Paiste ColorSound 2000; the rest of the cymbals are Zildjians.

PHOTO REQUIREMENTS

1. Photos must be high-quality and in color. 35mm slides are preferred; color prints will be considered; Polaroids not accepted. 2. You may send more than one view of the kit. 3. Only show drums, no people. 4. Shoot drums against a neutral background. Avoid "busy" backgrounds. 5. Clearly highlight special attributes of your kit. Send photo(s) to: Drumkit Of The Month, Modern Drummer, 12 Old Bridge Road, Cedar Grove, NJ 07009-1288. Photos cannot be returned.

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